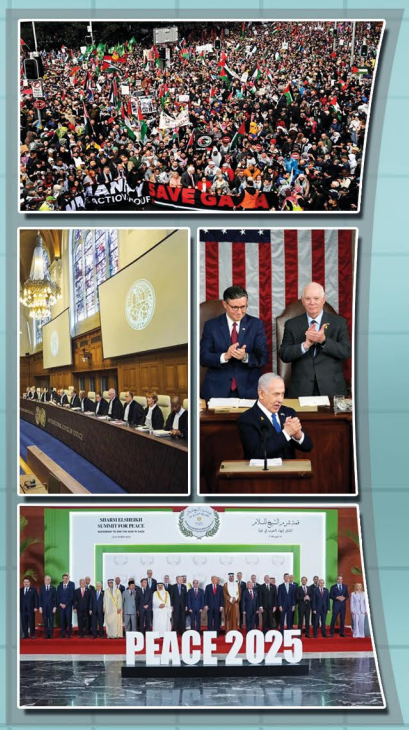
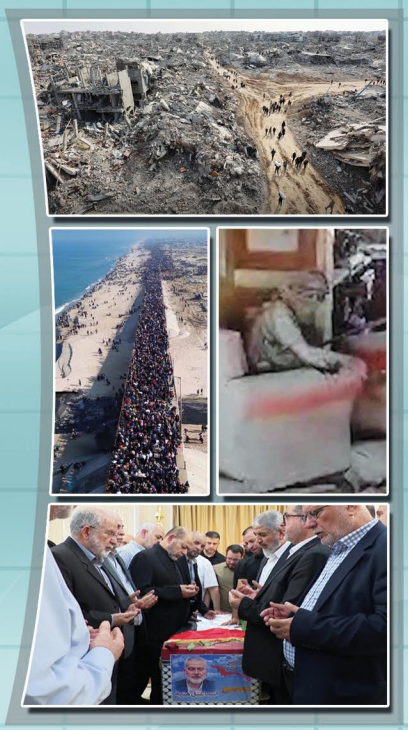
The Palestine Strategic Report 2024 – 2025





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Prof. Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh

Al-Zaytouna Centre For Studies & Consultations

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2024 – 2025

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The Palestine Strategic Report 2024 – 2025

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List of Abbreviations

PA	Palestinian Authority
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BoP	Board of Peace
CBR	Crude Birth Rate
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel)
CDR	Crude Death Rate
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CRS	Congressional Research Services
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
EGIS	Egyptian General Intelligence Service
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GIS	General Intelligence Service
GS	Gaza Strip
GSF	Global Sumud Flotilla
Gulf CAN	Gulf Coalition Against Normalisation
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IDI	Israel Democracy Institute
INGOs	International non-governmental organizations
INSS	The Institute for National Security Studies
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISA	Israel Security Agency (Shabak)
ISF	International Stabilization Force
JISS	Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
LAS	League of Arab States
MB	Muslim Brothers
MK	Israeli Knesset member
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCPPA	National Commission for Palestinian Popular Action

NII	National Insurance Institute of Israel
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OCHA-oPt	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-occupied Palestinian territory
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PCC	Palestinian Central Council
PCPA	Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP-GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command
PIJ	Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PMA	Palestine Monetary Authority
PNC	Palestinian National Council
PNI	Palestinian National Initiative
PPP	Palestinian People's Party
RC	Refugee Camp
RP	Registered Person
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SIS	Egypt's State Information Service
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
US	United States of America
WB	West Bank

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Introduction

Although The years 2024–2025 were largely defined by the dynamics of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, during which Israel pursued its genocidal campaign, starvation and forced displacement against the Palestinian population in Gaza Strip (GS). Simultaneously, it intensified repression, annexation policies and Judaization measures in the West Bank (WB), particularly in relation to *al-Aqsa* Mosque and Jerusalem. Moreover, Israel expanded the scope of its military operations to include Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Yemen, seeking to consolidate regional dominance and impose a "new Middle East" in line with its strategic vision. Within this context, the Palestinian resistance, together with its popular base, exhibited an exceptional and resilient model of military performance under extremely adverse conditions. Despite the enormous human and material costs, as well as the extensive destruction in GS, Israel nevertheless failed to achieve its declared objectives. At the same time, Iran, along with resistance movements in Lebanon and Yemen, provided sustained support to the Palestinian resistance and engaged in direct confrontations with Israel, in addition to the involvement of the Iraqi resistance.

During the same period, the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian Authority (PA) in Ramallah increasingly appeared unable to manage escalating challenges, as institutional fragility deepened, popular legitimacy eroded further, and the peace process on which they rely reached a clear impasse. Consequently, this trajectory reinforced the PA's role in Ramallah as a functional authority operating within Israel's framework, while sustained efforts continued to exclude resistance factions from meaningful participation in Palestinian representative institutions. In parallel, the Arab and Islamic environment, despite varying degrees of support, was no better in practice. It was characterized by structural weakness and limited engagement with the Palestine issue, as several states continued to pursue normalization with Israel while simultaneously restricting or isolating resistance actors, even as the Israeli threat to regional "national security" became increasingly pronounced.

Despite the centrality of the Palestine issue on the global agenda throughout 2024–2025, alongside an unprecedented level of international support, it remains unlikely that this momentum will translate into meaningful gains on the ground in the near term. This is largely because Israel continues to act as a state effectively "above the law," while the US retains "exclusive control" over the international management of the Palestine file, seeking to advance its vision through a proposed "Board of Peace" in GS and by promoting normalization across the region. However, the broader trajectory of events reflects a period of global "transition" marked by instability and intersecting regional and international crises, including within Israel and the US. Accordingly, the Palestine issue faces significant "existential" risks, including political marginalization or even erasure. Nevertheless, these volatile conditions also open up potential opportunities, provided they are properly assessed and strategically leveraged.

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This is the fourteenth volume of the Palestine Strategic Report (PSR) series. Over time, the report has established itself as a leading reference in Palestine studies and an indispensable resource for researchers, specialists and interested readers. It provides extensive, precise and well-documented material, presented within an objective analytical framework grounded in rigorous academic standards and research methodologies, while also seeking to anticipate near-term developments. Moreover, PSR is distinguished by its comprehensive scope. It covers internal Palestinian dynamics, the Israeli scene, and the trajectories of both resistance and the peace process, as well as the Arab, Islamic, and international dimensions of the Palestine issue. In addition, it allocates substantial attention to the Land, Jerusalem and its holy sites, alongside Palestinian demographic and economic conditions.

As in previous editions of the PSR, the names of contributors, along with chapter titles and their respective research topics, are listed at the beginning of the volume rather than at the start of each individual chapter. This approach reflects the collective nature of the PSR and, moreover, acknowledges that the editing process of this report, as with all previous editions, extends beyond conventional editorial practices. Indeed, substantial additions, revisions, and updates have been introduced in several chapters, thereby making responsibility for the final form of the text a shared one.

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Finally, we praise Allah for the success of this report and for its recognition as a specialized reference. We also extend our gratitude to all those who supported and encouraged this work, and we remain open to constructive criticism, advice and suggestions.

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Editor

Prof. Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh

Chapter One

The Internal Palestinian Scene

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Introduction

Operation al-Aqsa Flood and its repercussions constituted the most consequential development shaping the internal Palestinian landscape across multiple levels during 2024 and 2025. In this regard, both the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) struggled to manage their response, demonstrating limited capacity to adapt to the evolving dynamics of the confrontation. At the same time, these developments had clear repercussions for intra-Palestinian relations, both among the factions and in their interactions with the PA. Divergent approaches to the confrontation, coupled with conflicting visions for the "day after" in Gaza Strip (GS), further deepened the Palestinian schism and undermined prospects for national consensus in the face of mounting challenges.

Moreover, rather than prompting a reassessment of its policy of security coordination with Israel in light of Israel's genocidal actions, the PA continued its pursuit of resistance groups in the West Bank (WB). Concurrently, it wagered on a return to governance in GS after the war; however, this prospect encountered rejection from both Israel and the United States (US), alongside intensified demands to reform and restructure the PA in line with Israeli and US requirements.

In the diaspora, Palestinian popular conferences sought to establish new mechanisms for coordinating efforts and enhancing the role of Palestinians abroad in the national struggle. In Syria and Lebanon, factions confronted acute challenges amid sudden and pressing political shifts. Simultaneously, Palestinians in the 1948-occupied territories faced intense pressures aimed at isolating them from engagement with the WB and GS, yet they persisted in challenging these constraints and breaking the silence.

This chapter examines the internal Palestinian landscape during the two years of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, analyzing how different actors responded across multiple arenas of the confrontation.

First: The PA: Performance and Its Impact on the Internal Arena

Throughout 2024 and 2025, the governments of Mohammad Shtayyeh and Mohammad Mustafa faced three central challenges: responding to international pressurres for institutional reform as a path to PA rehabilitation, managing the financial crisis, and overseeing affairs in GS.

During this period, the PA confronted unprecedented international and legal pressures that targeted its political legitimacy and constrained its external maneuverability. At the outset of 2024, US and international calls intensified for comprehensive reforms under the rubric of a "revitalized Palestinian Authority." In March 2024, the PA presidency appointed Mohammad Mustafa to form the nineteenth government, which assumed office on 31/3/2024 as a technocratic "government of competence" designed to present an internationally acceptable administrative model.[1] This formation reflected sustained international and Arab pressure to implement "PA reforms" as a prerequisite for any post-war role in GS, with primary objectives focused on humanitarian relief, reconstruction and institutional unification.[2]

However, the government emerged amid "significant political opposition." The resistance factions, Hamas, the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (PIJ), and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), regarded it as a unilateral step that reinforced centralized decision-making and deepened division, rather than addressing it within a unified national framework. In their view, priority should have been given to forming a "national unity government" through comprehensive dialogue, rather than an administratively appointed cabinet aligned with international criteria.[3]

On the ground, the government faced acute structural constraints from the outset. On the one hand, Israel's continued withholding of clearance revenues left it unable to meet its financial obligations to public employees and the broader public sector. On the other hand, its ambition to assume governance in GS was blocked by categorical Israeli opposition, compounded by the absence of internal consensus necessary to confer operational legitimacy. By mid-2025, the government remained largely stagnant: while it managed to project an "administratively"

acceptable model to international actors, it failed to convert this into a political "breakthrough" capable of ending the Palestinian schism or mitigating the impact of the ongoing aggression.

Meanwhile, former Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh accused the US administration of shifting responsibility onto the PA, noting that its reform demands did not include the appointment of a vice president. He further recalled that in 2003 the US had pressed for the establishment of a prime ministerial post, cautioning that "we will not allow history to repeat itself." Moreover, he emphasized the PA's rejection of demands to halt payments to the families of those killed and detainees, maintaining that salaries were directed to public employees in GS rather than to Hamas. He also noted that a comprehensive reform program had already been introduced in 2022 and was welcomed at the time.[4] Nevertheless, despite its criticism of US pressure, the Shtayyeh government proceeded, on 28/1/2024, to launch a new phase of reforms across the judicial, administrative, security and financial sectors.[5]

The newly appointed prime minister, Mohammad Mustafa, stated on 31/3/2024 that institutional reform within the PA constituted both a necessity and a national priority, emphasizing that it is a cumulative and ongoing process rather than a cosmetic adjustment.[6] As a practical step, his government established, in its first session, the Standing Ministerial Committee on Reform and an office for Development and Institutional Reform within the Prime Minister's Office to oversee the implementation of the development and reform program.[7] During 2024 and 2025, the PA presidency managed international pressures for reform and articulated its position on GS, while assigning the financial crisis portfolio to the government.

In response to international pressure and demands for PA reform, Mahmud 'Abbas, in his mandate to Mohammad Mustafa's government, articulated its primary objectives for advancing reform. These included establishing a governance framework grounded in transparency and accountability, combating corruption, and preparing for legislative and presidential elections across all Palestinian governorates, including East Jerusalem. The mandate further emphasized the coordinated reconstruction of GS and the restoration of unified Palestinian institutions.[8]

Nonetheless, in a move that ran counter to the reform agenda, the PA president issued a controversial decree on 9/9/2024, amending the law regulating the salaries and benefits of members of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), government officials and governors. The Office of Grievances at the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) promptly called for the decree's immediate annulment, noting that it disproportionately extends retirement privileges to senior officials at the ministerial level, thereby undermining the retirement rights of other employees.[9]

Simultaneously, in response to international calls for the reform of educational curricula, 'Abbas directed the government to send a high-level Palestinian delegation to consult with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the aim of aligning Palestinian curricula with UNESCO's international standards and with broader international obligations.[10]

On 27/11/2024, Mahmud 'Abbas issued a constitutional declaration designating the President of the Palestine National Council (PNC) to temporarily assume the responsibilities of the PA President in the event of a vacancy, pending the conduct of presidential elections.[11] In response, four Palestinian conferences[12] issued a statement underscoring that political legitimacy rests with the people and rejecting Mahmud 'Abbas's decree, which they viewed as an attempt to transfer authority from one individual to another. Reflecting internal divisions within Fatah over the measure, Fatah's Central Committee member Jibril Rajoub observed, "We have million questions regarding the recent constitutional decree concerning Rawhi Fattouh's assumption of the presidency in the event of a vacancy," adding that what occurred with the late President Yasir 'Arafat cannot be replicated by one individual assuming three or more positions. His remarks underscored that Palestinians are currently navigating a period of political transition and a broader reconfiguration of the national political landscape.[13]

In a further controversial measure, widely interpreted as aligning with international and Israeli conditions, Mahmud 'Abbas issued, on 10/2/2025, a decree-law revoking the provisions contained in existing laws and regulations governing the system of financial allowances allocated to the families of prisoners, those killed, and the wounded. In response, Qadura Fares, head of the Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, voiced strong opposition, urging Mahmud 'Abbas to reverse the decree and withdraw it without delay. He subsequently

convened a press conference, during which he announced the rejection of the decision by prisoners' institutions, noting that they had been taken aback by a decree drafted by what he described as "misleading and misinformed advisers."[14] Against this backdrop of criticism, 'Abbas issued a presidential decree on 18/2/2025 referring Qadura Fares to retirement and appointing Raed Arafat Abu al-Humus as his successor with ministerial rank.[15]

The years 2024 and 2025 were marked by a significant series of appointments and dismissals across administrative and security institutions. In this context, on 15/2/2024, Major General 'Abd Sulaiman Ahmad Abu Muhaimid ('Abdul Qadir al-T'amri) was sworn in as Director General of the Preventive Security Service (PSS), while Brigadier General Iyyad Taher Muhammad Aqra' simultaneously assumed office as Deputy Director of the same agency.[16] Moreover, on 1/3/2025, a presidential decree appointed Major General al-'Abd Ibrahim 'Abdul Salam Khalil as Commander of the National Security Forces, succeeding Major General Nidal 'Ali Mahmud Abu Dukhan, who had been retired. Concurrently, another decree promoted Brigadier General Akram Mahmud 'Ali Thawabteh to the rank of Major General and appointed him as Director of the Civil Defense.[17]

Hussein al-Sheikh remains one of the most prominent candidates to succeed Mahmud 'Abbas, with several arrangements made during this period in preparation for the transition. On 26/2/2022, he was appointed as secretary-general of the PLO Executive Committee and head of its Negotiations Department. Subsequently, on 25/2/2025, Mahmud 'Abbas retired al-Sheikh from his post as head of the General Authority for Civil Affairs (GACA), citing "the public interest,"[18] and, on 26/4/2025, appointed him Deputy Chair of the PLO Executive Committee and Deputy Chair of the PA. Thereafter, on 26/10/2025, 'Abbas issued a presidential decree stipulating that al-Sheikh would assume presidential responsibilities on an interim basis in the event of the president's inability to perform his duties, for a period of ninety days, during which elections would be held or his mandate could be extended once by a decision of the Palestinian Central Council (PCC). Nonetheless, al-Sheikh continues to face extensive criticism within the Palestinian arena, particularly concerning his professionalism and networks of relations. At the level of public opinion, polling data indicate consistently weak support. A survey published by *The Guardian* in May 2025 recorded support at 2%, while a poll by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion (PCPO) in the same

month showed 19% support in his capacity as deputy to ‘Abbas. Earlier, in December 2023, the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) reported support at only 1%.[19]

At the same time as the formation of Mohammad Mustafa’s government, Mahmud ‘Abbas issued a decree appointing Judge Mohammad ‘Abdul Ghani al-‘Awiwi as President of the Supreme Court/ Court of Cassation and head of the High Judicial Council.[20] He also promulgated decrees appointing a number of new governors in Hebron, Nablus, Jenin, Bethlehem, Tubas, Jericho and the Northern Rift Valleys. Moreover, on 15/4/2024, Mahmud ‘Abbas issued a decision to establish a new board of directors for the Palestine Investment Fund (PIF), chaired by Iyad Joudeh.[21] Subsequently, on 21/4/2024, he appointed Riyad al-Maliki as Presidential Adviser for International Affairs and Special Envoy to the President, with ministerial rank. Later, on 27/5/2024, he issued a decree appointing Amal Faraj as head of the State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau (SAACB).[22] In addition, he issued a decision promoting Colonel Nizar Sa‘id Sadiq al-Hajj to the rank of Brigadier General and appointing him Deputy Director General of the PSS, effective 5/5/2025.[23]

The Financial Crisis

Throughout 2024 and 2025, the PA and the Palestinian population in the WB experienced one of the most severe financial and socio-economic crises since the PA’s establishment. This crisis was the result of the convergence of Israel’s punitive measures and a marked decline in international support, which collectively drove the Palestinian economy to the brink of collapse. From the outset of 2024, Israel maintained its policy of the “systematic seizure” of clearance revenues, justifying this by its refusal to release funds allocated for GS and for the families of those killed or imprisoned. As a result, the PA has struggled to pay public sector salaries regularly, with disbursement rates in many months limited to between 50% and 60%.[24]

Domestically, Mohammad Mustafa’s government attempted to manage scarce resources through an “austerity and reform program.” However, the scale of its financial obligations to the private sector, banks and public employees significantly exceeded expectations, thereby contributing to a marked deterioration in public service delivery, particularly in the health and education sectors.[25] By mid-2025,

international actors had begun to issue warnings that the ongoing financial strangulation could precipitate a destabilizing "social explosion," especially in light of the PA's diminishing capacity to provide an effective social safety net for vulnerable groups.[26] Consequently, by the end of 2025, the Palestinian economy in the WB remained burdened by what may be characterized as "political coercion," whereby access to basic livelihoods became increasingly contingent upon political considerations tied to sovereignty. This dynamic, in turn, further eroded public trust in the PA and its institutions.

Sustained Pressures

Despite the PA's reform efforts, it remained subject to sustained legal and political pressures from the US. On 20/6/2025, the US Supreme Court issued a ruling permitting US citizens to sue the PA and the PLO for compensation related to attacks that occurred during the first decade of the twenty-first century (2001–2010), posing a significant legal and financial threat to the Palestinian institutional framework.[27]

Moreover, pressures were not confined to the judicial sphere; rather, they extended to encompass direct political sanctions in response to Palestinian diplomatic initiatives in international forums. On 31/7/2025, the US Department of State announced the imposition of sanctions on officials from the PA and the PLO, citing "undermining the peace process" and pursuing the internationalization of the conflict through the International Criminal Court (ICC).[28] Washington thus interpreted these Palestinian legal initiatives, aimed at holding Israel accountable for its actions in GS, as an attempt to "militarize the political track," thereby placing the PA in direct confrontation with the US administration, notwithstanding the ongoing security coordination between the two sides.[29]

In the same vein, on 9/9/2024, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz threatened to "break and dissolve" the PA "if they move forward with aggressive measures against Israel in the United Nations." Katz cautioned that "If the Palestinian Authority acts against Israel in complete contradiction to the commitments it undertook in the interim arrangements that were signed, Israel will act in the same way and stop all cooperation with the PA and bring about its dissolution."[30]

Over the course of 2025, Israel's policy of economic coercion persisted, further deepening the PA's financial crisis. On 9/2/2025, the Jerusalem District

Court issued a temporary freeze order on approximately 2.8 billion shekels ($760 million) of PA funds, following a lawsuit filed by hundreds of individuals affected by the 7/10/2023 attack and the subsequent war.[31]

The Deepening PA–Public Divide

During 2024 and 2025, the divide between the PA and the Palestinian public in the WB and GS deepened considerably. Opinion polls consistently reflected a pronounced decline in the popularity of the official leadership, alongside growing demands for substantive political change. In particular, a public opinion poll in 2024 indicated that an overwhelming majority of Palestinians, 84%, called for the resignation of Mahmud ‘Abbas,[32] contending that the PA’s performance amid the genocidal war on GS failed to meet the scale of the existential challenges confronting the Palestinian people. Furthermore, this period witnessed a marked rise in public dissatisfaction, driven in part by perceptions that the PA had become “excessively responsive to international pressures” at the expense of fostering internal national consensus.[33]

With respect to public freedoms, 2025 witnessed a discernible intensification of restrictions on popular and trade union mobilization in the WB. Human rights organizations documented attempts to constrain activities expressing support for resistance, as well as those advocating comprehensive economic reforms. Consequently, these dynamics generated latent tensions with unions and professional associations, which had been pressing for the full disbursement of salaries and the establishment of an adequate social safety net.[34] Notwithstanding these tensions, the PA sought to restore a measure of public confidence through the issuance of a “temporary constitutional decree,” alongside expanded international engagement. However, the prevailing perception remained that such initiatives amounted to a form of “political deflection,” effectively circumventing the long-delayed obligation to hold comprehensive elections.[35]

Thus, by the close of 2025, the PA appeared to be operating within a framework of “defensive survival,” attempting to navigate the dual pressures of Israel’s financial restrictions and existential threats, on the one hand, and mounting domestic demands for genuine sovereignty and inclusive national representation, on the other.

Second: The PLO: Institutions and Representation

Throughout the period covered by this report, the PLO's institutions, most notably the Executive Committee and the PCC, faced significant criticism, primarily regarding the perceived "gap" between formal institutional actions and developments on the ground in GS and the WB. They were further accused of "bureaucratic inertia" at a time when rapid political responsiveness was required. Although the Executive Committee continued to convene regular meetings and issue statements condemning Israeli aggression, broad segments of the Palestinian public regarded these measures as confined to "traditional diplomacy," insufficiently responsive to realities on the ground and incapable of mobilizing international action commensurate with the scale of the crisis. While the Executive Committee emphasized "international legitimacy" and diplomatic appeals, the Palestinian street, particularly in GS and the WB refugee camps (RCs), pursued its own resistance strategies, largely independent of the PLO's institutional framework.

The PLO also undertook appointments and structural adjustments within several departments, including the Department of Expatriate Affairs and the Department of Human Rights. Yet persistent "bureaucratic rigidity," "centralized administration" and inadequate budget allocations continued to hinder their transformation into effective "sovereign service" institutions. As a result, their role remained primarily symbolic and media-oriented, rather than translating into substantive impact on the ground.[36]

The crisis of effectiveness was further exacerbated by the persistent centralization of decision-making within the organization. Its institutions continued to suffer from limited Palestinian-wide representation, particularly due to the absence of Hamas and PIJ, causing its decisions to be widely perceived as reflecting the policies of the PA leadership or Fatah, rather than representing the "broader Palestinian constituency."

Reconciliation Efforts and the Revitalization of the PLO

In 2024 and 2025, the PLO faced escalating pressures to reform its institutional structure in response to profound transformations within the Palestinian public following Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Both popular movements and Palestinian factions increasingly demanded the activation of a "unified leadership framework"

as a transitional step toward incorporating Hamas and the PIJ into the PLO, arguing that the continued exclusion of these forces from the official umbrella undermined the PLO's capacity to represent the "entirety of the Palestinian people" in international arenas. Concurrently, calls from within the PLO intensified for convening a "unified PNC" to reconstruct the PLO's institutions on democratic foundations that would ensure the inclusion of influential actors on the ground. These calls were accompained by warnings that continued marginalization of legislative and oversight bodies threatened to erode the PLO's internationally recognized "representative legitimacy."[37]

The events of 7/10/2023 and the subsequent full-scale Israeli aggression imposed a new and contentious dynamic on the relationship between Fatah and Hamas, oscillating between necessary field coordination and fierce political competition over the "representation of the national project." Whereas Hamas perceived Operation al-Aqsa Flood as an opportunity to redefine the fundamentals and establish a new political equation beyond the Oslo Accords, Fatah's leadership, representing the PA, approached the situation with considerable caution, striving to balance the popular sentiment supportive of resistance against its international obligations and the risk of losing "official legitimacy."

Within Fatah's Central Committee, pronounced divisions emerged over how to navigate the "post-war period." One faction emphasized the necessity of "renewing the PA" to meet international expectations, whereas another warned that any leadership failing to align with the momentum of resistance risked losing its remaining popular legitimacy.[38]

Throughout 2024, international diplomatic initiatives sought to revive the Palestinian reconciliation process, aiming to establish a unified leadership capable of addressing the challenges of the "post-war period." The Moscow dialogues in February 2024 marked the initial phase of this effort, convening Palestinian factions, including Fatah, Hamas and the PIJ, to reaffirm a united front against aggression. Nonetheless, these discussions largely produced "verbal consensus," with minimal substantive implementation on the ground.[39]

The most consequential development was the Beijing Declaration in July 2024, whereby China brokered a comprehensive agreement endorsed by 14 Palestinian factions. The accord stipulated the formation of an "interim national reconciliation

government" responsible for managing Palestinian affairs in the WB and GS and for unifying institutions in preparation for elections. This declaration constituted a significant political breakthrough, representing the first occasion in which a clear timeline and concrete mechanisms were agreed upon under the sponsorship of an emerging international power.[40]

Nonetheless, these commitments collided with the deeply rooted schism, which had been firmly entrenched over the years. The Beijing Declaration encountered outright Israeli rejection alongside US reservations, thereby impeding the initiation of any concrete implementation. Moreover, persistent divergences over the PLO's "political program" and the conditions for international recognition further obstructed the translation of the "Beijing framework" into a lived reality for the Palestinian populace, who continue to endure severe systemic pressures. By the end of 2024, it had become evident through external dialogues that the fundamental challenge was not the "drafting of agreements," but rather the absence of political will, compounded by external pressures that undermine national consensus and perpetuate the schism.

Over the course of 2024 dialogues, the official leadership of the PLO emphasized that any factions seeking integration must formally recognize the Oslo Accords and existing international obligations. In contrast, Hamas and the PIJ argued that the PLO should return to its original charter as a national liberation movement, unbound by the constraints of the Oslo Accords, which they consider both politically and practically obsolete. This divergence rendered the question of "organizational reform" a postponed matter, despite the preliminary consensus reached in Beijing regarding the imperative of institutional unity.[41]

By 2025, with unity talks at an impasse, the crisis intensified as the question of "Gaza administration" emerged as a central obstacle. Hamas insisted on a "national partnership" guaranteeing the retention of the resistance's arms, while Fatah demanded "one state, one government, one law and one weapon" as a precondition for returning to GS. This fundamental divergence reduced relations between the two factions to a "tense truce" imposed by their common enemy, rather than evolving into a "strategic alliance" capable of ending the historical schism, leaving the Palestinian political house exposed to external interventions exploiting this fragmentation.[42]

During 2024–2025, national and Islamic forces outside the Fatah–Hamas axis played a role far beyond that of observers or intermediaries, acting instead as a stabilizing force to prevent the internal front from collapsing under external pressure and aggression. The PIJ was instrumental in strengthening field coordination in the WB, transcending traditional political divides and asserting that "unity of arenas" represented the only effective response to plans for displacement and the liquidation of the Palestine issue.[43] Simultaneously, the PFLP and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), spearheaded political initiatives within and beyond the PLO framework, advocating collective leadership and opposing unilateral decision-making. Their influence peaked in 2025 through the Palestinian Democratic Rally, which called for translating verbal understandings reached in Beijing and Moscow into institutionalized mechanisms that ensured inclusive participation in conflict management and in guiding the transitional phase.[44]

PLO and the International Community

The PLO entered a critical juncture in its relations with the international community, as tensions emerged between the "legal legitimacy" conferred by the United Nations (UN), which recognizes it as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and the "political realism" imposed by international powers in addressing the aftermath of the war in GS. During the second half of 2024 and into mid-2025, the Palestinian leadership pursued coordinated legal and diplomatic efforts to strengthen its domestic legitimacy and counter criticism of its response to Israel's aggression in GS. In September 2024, the Palestinian mission to the UN spearheaded an intensive diplomatic campaign, resulting in a revised draft resolution calling on Israel to end its illegal presence in the occupied territories within 12 months.[45]

This initiative drew directly on the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) advisory opinion affirming the occupation's illegality. Ambassador Riyad Mansour submitted the draft with the backing of over forty states, aiming to hold the international community accountable for its legal obligations regarding the Palestine issue.[46] Concurrently, the PA advanced legal measures against Israeli leaders, welcoming the ICC Prosecutor's request to issue arrest warrants against the Israeli Prime Minister and Defense Minister, framing it as both a vindication of Palestinian rights and a historic step toward accountability for war crimes.[47]

The recognition of the Palestinian state remained a central concern for the PA government. On 10/11/2024, the PA president reported that 149 countries had recognized Palestine and disclosed ongoing discussions with nations including Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Australia, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany, and the United Kingdom (UK). He emphasized that, while many of these states are prepared to extend recognition, they prefer to do so collectively, at a moment that would maximize its impact.[48]

In 2025, reports highlighted the PLO's success in consolidating the State of Palestine's "legal standing" within international organizations, thereby intensifying legal pressure on Israel at the ICC. Yet, this diplomatic achievement faced regional and international attempts to "engineer" a new Palestinian leadership aligned with a post-war agenda. The PLO regarded these efforts as an infringement on its sovereignty and independent decision-making. Successive "international recognitions," particularly by European states, reinforced the PLO's position, emphasizing that engagement with the Palestine issue should proceed through its "official channels," contingent on reforms ensuring inclusivity and transparency.[49] On 22/9/2025, one day after Britain, alongside Australia, Canada and Portugal, recognized Palestine, the British Foreign Office said that the Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper stressed that "Hamas have no role to play in the future of a Palestinian state" and affirmed to her Israeli counterpart, Gideon Sa'ar, that recognition of Palestine "is about the best way to respect the security for Israel as well as the security for Palestinians."[50] These developments reveal that some countries offered conditional support, effectively promoting a specific leadership path and constraining the Palestinian people's freedom to make their own decisions and choose their leadership, thereby further entrenching the existing schism.

Nonetheless, developments in 2025 underscored that the PLO's legitimacy as the representative of the Palestinian people hinges on its capacity to evolve from a "bureaucratic structure" into an effective national body that encompasses all forms of resistance and popular activism. Observers of the Palestine issue are closely monitoring its ability to reflect public sentiment, placing the organization under a stark choice: undertake comprehensive reform and unity or risk "marginalization" amid the rise of grassroots forces.[51]

Third: Internal Conditions of the Factions and Their Interrelations

The Hamas Movement

In 2024–2025, Hamas confronted severe existential challenges due to a systematic Israeli campaign targeting its leadership both domestically and abroad. Despite the deaths of senior figures, including Political Bureau Chief Isma'il Haniyyah in Tehran, his deputy Saleh al-'Aruri in Beirut, and later Yahya Sinwar and Chief of General Staff Muhammad Daif in GS, the movement displayed considerable resilience, swiftly rebuilding its leadership. This, in turn, reflected the strength of its institutional structure, which has preserved unity in both military and political decision-making amid the intensity of the war.

Hamas also preserved its standing as the leading Palestinian movement. Surveys by the Ramallah-based PSR indicate that, throughout 2024–2025, it retained broad support across WB and GS, despite the heavy toll inflicted on the Palestinian population during Israeli brutality and the genocidal campaign that followed Operation al-Aqsa Flood.

In the context of external pressures, the Hamas movement, in April 2024, countered a wave of what it termed "fabricated media reports" intended to pressure Qatar over hosting its leadership and to extract concessions in prisoner-exchange negotiations. Musa Abu Marzuq, a member of the movement's political bureau, dismissed reports of a possible relocation of the leadership to Iraq, Syria or Türkiye as mere "media atmospherics," emphasizing that the movement's leaders are embedded within their society and would not yield to policies of displacement or intimidation.[52]

With regard to Hamas's administration of the GS during the war, and following the implementation of a temporary ceasefire in January 2025, Palestinian security forces redeployed across several areas of the GS. Israeli Army Radio reported that "Hamas police are redeploying throughout the Strip," further noting that Hamas, having not relinquished control over any part of the GS at any stage of the war, was utilizing the pause to consolidate and reinforce its governance.[53] Subsequently, in May 2025, the Ministry of Interior in the GS reconstituted an executive force of approximately five thousand personnel from various security and police agencies, integrating them into a unified framework to restore internal security and stability.[54]

Regarding armed groups collaborating with Israel, Hamas and the resistance factions acted swiftly to confront them. On 6/7/2025, the Joint Operations Room of the Palestinian factions explicitly denounced Yasir Abu Shabab and his group as tools of Israel, accusing them of treason and operating under the protection of the Israeli army with the approval of its political leadership. The Joint Operations Room emphasized that the group had been "formed and armed by the enemy to carry out illicit security operations" and pledged to hold its members accountable in accordance with their betrayal.[55]

Following the ceasefire in the GS in October 2025, the Ministry of Interior and National Security announced that its agencies would intensify efforts to restore order and address the chaos Israel had sought to spread over the preceding two years. Palestinian media reported the launch of a comprehensive security campaign to investigate and prosecute those involved in unlawfully seizing citizens' property, while individuals who had collaborated with Israel or acted unlawfully during the conflict were ordered to surrender within 48 hours.[56]

Two days after the Ministry of Interior and National Security issued its statement, sources reported that GS security forces had fully taken control of the armed militia in Gaza City and launched a comprehensive sweep of the area. Several individuals accused of executing displaced persons and collaborating with Israel were killed in clashes, while around sixty militia members were arrested and transferred to secure locations for further investigation.[57] On 13/10/2025, a Hamas security official in the GS confirmed that 32 members of a "gang" had been killed as part of an operation initiated after the ceasefire on 10/10/2025.[58] On the same day, resistance-affiliated security forces executed seven collaborators with Israel and other lawbreakers by shooting, in a public event attended by crowds voicing support for the resistance.[59]

The PA presidency condemned what it described as "extrajudicial executions," while Palestinian tribes, clans and resistance factions expressed support for measures aimed at restoring security. Resistance groups commended the campaign for enforcing law and order and targeting collaborators, mercenaries, thieves and armed road robbers and those cooperating with Israel, stressing that it enjoys broad national consensus across factions.[60]

According to the Director of the GS Government Media Office on 14/10/2025, over seventy gang members surrendered themselves and their weapons under

the government's general amnesty initiative. He further noted that more than fifty criminal strongholds posing direct threats to civilians were dismantled, with security forces affirming their commitment to safeguarding the Palestinian population.[61]

Fatah: Factional Struggles and the Stakes of the "Day After"

Between 2024 and 2025, Fatah underwent a period of intense internal turbulence, with debates over "leadership succession" and reform agendas intensifying amid the genocidal war on GS. Despite official stagnation, 2025 saw significant moves to reorganize the Fatah political house, most notably Nasser al-Qudwa's return to the movement's "legitimate framework" in October, when he called on Fatah and PA President Mahmud ʻAbbas to instate him to a position enabling him to advance the movement's agenda.[62] This return, influenced in part by regional pressures to reintegrate dismissed members, was widely interpreted as an effort to heal internal divisions and prepare the movement for the challenges of the "day after" the war, especially given that Marwan Barghouthi remained the leading figure in public opinion polls as the most broadly accepted potential successor to ʻAbbas.[63]

In a significant development reflecting the pressures of the "transitional phase," credible reports indicate that unprecedented meetings took place in Cairo between a Fatah delegation led by Hussein al-Sheikh and Samir Mashharawi, deputy head of the Democratic Reform Bloc. Facilitated by Egyptian mediation, these talks sought to bridge divisions within the movement.[64] The initiative comes at a critical juncture, as Fatah attempts to reclaim its leadership in the Palestinian street, which has increasingly gravitated toward resistance, compelling the "official current" to pursue significant reforms to avoid marginalization.

Concurrently, Fatah sought to mobilize its diaspora branches. In October 2025, the Seventh Organizational Conference of Fatah Movement in Lebanon convened with broad leadership participation, aiming to reinforce its presence in RCs.[65]

Palestinian Factions in Syria and the Search for a Headquarters

Following Syria's political transition at the end of 2024, Palestinian factions faced a complex environment, notably the PFLP–General Command (PFLP–GC) and the Vanguard for the Popular Liberation War—Al-Saʻiqah faction. Khalid Mishʻal, head of Hamas abroad, intervened with the Syrian Military Operations Administration and the Palestinian factions to prevent retaliatory measures. An

agreement was reached to detain those accused of fighting alongside the former regime, resulting in the arrest of approximately 20 members of the PFLP–GC, while Secretary-General Talal Naji and Al-Sa'iqah leader Muhammad Qays remained unaffected.[66]

Illustrating the difficulties some factions encountered in adapting to the evolving situation in Syria and Lebanon, Bater Nimr, the PFLP–GC's security official in Lebanon, announced the complete evacuation of its five external sites outside the RCs across the country. All weapons and equipment at these sites were transferred to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), described by Nimr as "the safeguard of Lebanon," with the operation fully coordinated and agreed upon with military authorities.[67]

In May 2025, Palestinian sources reported that leaders of factions formerly aligned with President Bashar al-Assad had left Syria. According to Agence France-Presse (AFP), a leader from one such faction reported that most of the leaders of groups supported by Tehran had left Damascus for several countries, including Lebanon. He further noted that the new Syrian authorities had confiscated the factions' assets, encompassing private residences, headquarters, vehicles and training camps in rural Damascus and other governorates.[68]

Factional Relations

Throughout 2024 and 2025, Palestinian resistance factions demonstrated a high degree of political and operational coordination in response to the Israeli war on GS, while a significant divide persisted with Fatah, which continued to represent the official leadership of the PLO and the PA.

In July 2024, a pivotal meeting in Doha brought together Isma'il Haniyyah, head of Hamas's political bureau, and Ziad al-Nakhaleh, Secretary-General of PIJ, with his deputy Muhammad al-Hindi. The meeting reaffirmed a unified approach in negotiations to halt the aggression and concluded with a direct call for the PLO to revoke its recognition of Israel in response to Knesset decisions rejecting the Palestinian state.[69]

Regarding inter-factional coordination, Hamas and the DFLP held a bilateral meeting in GS in September 2024. Both parties affirmed that resistance is a legitimate right recognized by international norms and conventions, and maintained that it will persist as long as Palestine remains under Israeli occupation.

Moreover, they reiterated their commitment to sustained bilateral coordination across political, military, field and national spheres, with the aim of serving the Palestinian people and the Palestine issue, safeguarding the internal front, and addressing, with firmness, acts of sabotage, collaboration and lawlessness.[70] This collaboration was evident in joint operations by their armed wings across multiple fronts, reflecting a convergence of militant identity that transcended narrow factional allegiances.

By contrast, the political track between Fatah and Hamas remained stagnant and fraught with difficulties. Reports indicate that a "tense" meeting took place in Cairo on 27/10/2025 between Fatah, led by Hussein al-Sheikh, and Hamas, led by Khalil al-Hayya, under direct pressure from the Egyptian General Intelligence Service (EGIS). Despite this pressure, the meeting concluded without tangible outcomes, as the Fatah delegation initially refused direct dialogue with Hamas and insisted on pursuing political appointments rather than formulating a shared national program.[71]

Rather than fostering Palestinian cohesion, Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the associated Israeli crimes intensified internal divisions and mutual recriminations. Fatah and the PA blamed Hamas and the resistance factions for the killings and destruction in GS.[72] Senior Fatah figures accused Hamas of "aligning with Iran and other regional axes, providing Israel with pretexts to carry out its largest campaign of extermination against our people." They also cautioned Hamas against "repeating its ventures in WB."[73] These assertions, frequently reiterated, relied more on rhetorical clichés than on objective evidence.

In response to media reports suggesting US and regional proposals for a reduced Palestinian state and extensive land swaps with Israel, the PA leadership warned the so-called "parties involved," specifically cautioning Hamas against engaging with such schemes.[74] Hamas firmly rejected the claims, asserting that they exist only "in the imagination of certain influential figures within the PA seeking to tarnish the movement's image."[75]

Disputes between the resistance factions and the PA leadership, including Fatah, extended to Lebanon, particularly over the disarmament of the RCs following Mahmud 'Abbas's agreement with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun on 21/5/2025, which placed all weapons under state control. Hamas condemned the joint Lebanese-Palestinian statement issued after Mahmud 'Abbas's visit to Lebanon,

arguing that it failed to reflect national consensus. The movement emphasized that it had neither participated in the meeting's outcomes nor been invited to the security discussions, asserting that "such positions should have been issued by the Palestinian Joint Action Committee, as the sole legitimate national reference."[76]

The dispute over weapons in the RCs has spread into Fatah's internal ranks, prompting its leadership in Lebanon to reaffirm full adherence to the presidential communiqué of 21/5/2025. The statement stressed that "any position or declaration outside this framework does not represent Fatah in Lebanon and is condemned," underscoring that official statements from the movement's media, as well as its regional and local leadership, serve as the sole authority on its positions.[77]

Highlighting the depth of the internal rift, Fatah's Central Committee member 'Azzam al-Ahmad, who oversees the Palestinian arena in Lebanon, dismissed his deputy, Palestinian Ambassador Ashraf Dabbour. A source in the Palestinian Joint Action Committee indicated that a dispute had arisen between 'Abbas and Dabbour over the management of the weapons withdrawal, with Dabbour acting independently without consulting other Palestinian parties or factions.

In response to the weapons handover in Burj al-Barajneh RC, several Palestinian factions emphasized that "what is taking place within the camp is an internal organizational matter specific to Fatah and has no direct or indirect bearing on Palestinian arms in the camps." They reiterated that these weapons "have always been and will remain solely linked to the right of return and the just Palestine issue. They will remain as long as the occupation persists on Palestinian land, and will be used exclusively against the Israeli enemy."[78]

Fourth: The "Day After" the War in GS

Throughout 2024 and 2025, restoring PA authority in GS became a central focus for the PLO and PA leadership. In response to criticism over its perceived weakness in confronting Israeli aggression, Mahmud 'Abbas announced before the Turkish Parliament, on 15/8/2024 that he and the Palestinian leadership would travel to GS, calling on Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT), "the leaders of Arab, Islamic, and friendly countries as well as the UN secretary-general to join his planned visit," and "urged the UN Security Council [UNSC] to ensure

their access to the besieged enclave."[79] However, this announcement was widely perceived as largely symbolic and lacking in credibility, a perception subsequently reinforced by the PA's failure to take concrete steps toward its implementation. Subsequently, following the ceasefire in GS in January 2025, the PA presidency reiterated its intention to assume full administrative responsibility in the Strip. It further emphasized that the State of Palestine retains legal and political jurisdiction over GS, as over the rest of the Palestinian territories in the WB and Jerusalem.[80]

Israeli and US Perspectives

Throughout 2024, the Israeli security-driven approach remained predominant, rejecting any political horizon that would grant Palestinians sovereignty in GS. In this vein, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu maintained that "his government seeks open-ended control over security and civilian affairs in the Gaza Strip."[81] Netanyahu's plan envisioned Gaza's "complete demilitarization" and stated that civil affairs in Gaza will be run by "local officials" who have "administrative experience" and who are not tied to "countries or entities that support terrorism," thereby effectively excluding the PA and resistance factions.[82]

Following the inauguration of Donald Trump in early 2025, a notable shift occurred in the management of the issue, as the "soft pressure" approach of the Joe Biden administration, advocating a "revitalized PA," gave way to a more pragmatic and assertive posture. Trump advanced a comprehensive ceasefire framework that granted Israel concrete security gains on the ground in exchange for promises of "economic prosperity."[83] Nevertheless, while this vision aligned with Netanyahu's aim of curbing Palestinian political agency, the new US administration demonstrated a greater capacity to press the Israeli government toward broader regional arrangements.[84]

On the ground, Israel sought to entrench new geopolitical realities throughout 2024 by consolidating control over the Philadelphi and Netzarim Corridors, framing its continued military presence as a non-negotiable "strategic necessity."[85] With the onset of 2025, these dynamics were further reinforced by US proposals advocating a temporary "international administrative authority" in the GS to oversee aid and reconstruction. This initiative, however, met with broad Palestinian rejection, as it was widely viewed as an attempt to impose an "international trusteeship" that would undermine national legitimacy.[86]

Simultaneously, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) emerged as a central target within post-war arrangements. Israel, backed by actors in Washington, has sought to eliminate UNRWA's role and replace it with alternative relief mechanisms, a move widely interpreted as aimed at dismantling the refugee issue at its core. Consequently, 2025 has evolved into a contest between the imposition of Israeli "security sovereignty" and a US-driven "regional deal," amid the deliberate marginalization of any sovereign Palestinian political project.

The Palestinian Position

As early as February 2024, PA President Mahmud 'Abbas declared that the GS is an integral part of the State of Palestine, and we are prepared to undertake all necessary steps to assume governing responsibilities in GS, WB, and East Jerusalem.[87] Subsequently, on 8/4/2024, the Palestinian Council of Ministers decided to establish the Higher National Committee for the Relief of the Southern Governorates, referring to the GS, tasking the Minister of State for Relief Affairs with coordinating with relevant stakeholders to develop a framework for the committee's membership, mandate and operational mechanisms.[88]

Furthermore, Cairo hosted a series of meetings between Hamas and Fatah. The first, in September 2024, addressed the war on the GS and broader political and field developments, with the aim of unifying national efforts.[89] This was followed in October 2024 by discussions on forming a committee to administer post-war governance in the GS, based on an Egyptian proposal, although deliberations were postponed. Subsequently, in early November 2024, a leadership meeting revisited the proposal within the broader effort to advance de-escalation and facilitate humanitarian aid.[90] By late November 2024, a round of talks further explored the establishment of a support committee to oversee the future administration of the GS.[91]

The discussions progressed in early December 2024, when the delegations met in Cairo on 1/12/2024 to address post-war governance in the GS. They focused on establishing an independent administrative committee to oversee the Strip, including aid, crossings and reconstruction, in coordination with all Palestinian factions.[92] On 4/12/2024, the two movements approved a draft agreement to form a "Community Support Committee" to manage the GS alongside the

PA government, based on an Egyptian proposal as a preliminary step toward a ceasefire.[93] Nonetheless, tensions resurfaced on 8/12/2024, when Fatah rejected the proposal, arguing that it could deepen the schism between GS and WB, while Hamas remained committed to its adoption.[94]

In January 2025, a PLO and Fatah delegation, acting on behalf of President Mahmud ʻAbbas (Abu Mazen), formally informed Egypt of the Palestinian leadership's rejection of the "Community Support Committee" and any initiative that would restore Hamas to power. This position generated tension in Cairo, given Egypt's sustained efforts to reconcile the divergent Palestinian perspectives.[95]

Over the course of 2025, the PLO and PA leadership intensified their discourse concerning the post-war governance of GS, consistently attributing responsibility for the Strip's dire conditions to Hamas and rejecting any role for it in administration. On 22/3/2025, Fatah explicitly called on Hamas to relinquish authority and withdraw from the governmental sphere to safeguard the "Palestinian presence" in GS.[96] PLO factions supportive of the PA endorsed this stance, emphasizing that Hamas should carefully evaluate both the internal and regional political landscape, attend to the voices and suffering of the people in GS, and cede governance to the legitimate leadership holding authority over the Strip.[97]

At the opening of the 32nd session of the PCC (23–24/4/2025), President ʻAbbas delivered his most forceful critique of Hamas to date, employing a strong insult and calling for the movement to surrender its weapons as well as Israeli prisoners and detainees. He questioned the necessity of its arsenal, asking, "What need do you have for it?" and underscored that "Hamas is now obligated—before us and our people—to end its takeover of governance and authority in Gaza entirely."[98] During a subsequent meeting with former British Prime Minister and former Quartet envoy Tony Blair, ʻAbbas reaffirmed the imperative of enabling the PA to assume full responsibility in GS. He emphasized that Hamas will not govern GS the following day. He further insisted that the movement must transfer its weapons to the PA and participate in political life in accordance with the PLO's political program, its international agenda and international legitimacy.[99]

As for the resistance factions, primarily Hamas and PIJ, they have consistently rejected any arrangements that do not arise from an unequivocal Palestinian national consensus. At the outset of 2025, amid growing discussions of "international

forces" or a "temporary civilian administration" under US sponsorship, Hamas asserted that "the day following the war will be an exclusively Palestinian decision, and no external guardianship over our people will be tolerated."[100] The "Moscow Meetings" and the "Beijing Declaration," in 2024, both emphasized the necessity of establishing a national unity government to manage Palestinian affairs in the WB and GS under the auspices of the PLO.[101]

Hamas and the resistance factions signaled strong willingness regarding GS's post-war future, expressing readiness to transfer governance to a Palestinian technocratic administration. In pursuit of halting the ongoing aggression against the Palestinian people and alleviating humanitarian suffering, they engaged constructively with President Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, agreeing to a ceasefire, the entry of aid, reconstruction and prisoner exchanges, while firmly preserving core national fundamentals and referring broader issues to Palestinian national consensus.

Following the implementation of the ceasefire, Cairo resumed hosting meetings between Hamas and Fatah delegations on 23/10/2025 to address the Palestinian situation and post-war arrangements in GS.[102] The expanded sessions on 24/10/2025 yielded a consensus to transfer GS's administration to a temporary committee of independent technocrats, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG), while also calling for a strategy to reinvigorate the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Cairo further outlined its post-war vision, proposing that GS be managed by a committee of qualified Gaza residents who remained during the war, with the factions granting preliminary approval to the proposed members.[103]

At the same time, 2025 witnessed a broad popular and factional consensus rejecting the so-called "new Village Leagues" and any Israeli attempts to install alternative leadership to administer civil affairs in GS. Palestinian data further indicate the failure of all Israeli efforts to engage with local clans for this purpose, as these clans collectively affirmed, in a joint statement, their allegiance to unified national representation.[104]

Regional and International Roles

During 2024, the centrality of the Arab role, particularly that of Qatar and Egypt, became increasingly evident, serving as a critical safeguard against the collapse of negotiation tracks. In this context, efforts concentrated on formulating the "Paris framework proposal" and advancing de-escalation proposals aimed at securing a gradual Israeli withdrawal.[105] By contrast, 2025 marked a notable shift in the "relative weight of external actors." Most prominently, Türkiye assumed a more consequential role in shaping ceasefire arrangements, underpinned by growing factional confidence in its guarantees and its capacity to maneuver effectively among international stakeholders.[106]

At the international level, the US in 2024 attempted to advance a "day-after" framework centered on the deployment of "international or Arab forces" to oversee security in GS; however, this proposal encountered a lukewarm Arab response and pronounced Palestinian reservations.[107] By early 2025, and under the impetus of the Trump administration, the emphasis shifted toward "conditional funding," whereby large-scale reconstruction initiatives were made contingent upon the establishment of a "technocratic apolitical Palestinian committee" enjoying regional acceptance and adhering to stringent security standards vis-à-vis Israel.[108]

In parallel, regional actors assumed an active role in "shaping" the prospective Palestinian leadership. Reports indicated pressure from certain Arab capitals to integrate the "reformist current" into the PA as part of arrangements for returning to GS, thereby generating subdued tensions with Ramallah.[109] Meanwhile, Russia and China expanded their political engagement by sponsoring reconciliation dialogues, while underscoring that any international arrangements not grounded in Palestinian national consensus would lack both legitimacy and sustainability.[110]

In conclusion, the first half of 2025 was marked by a contest between two competing frameworks: an "international and regional trusteeship" model, supported by the US to safeguard Israel's security, and a "national empowerment" approach, advanced by actors such as Qatar, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye to prevent the marginalization of the Palestine issue under the guise of relief and reconstruction. Consequently, the "day-after" scenario evolved into an arena of contestation not only between Palestinians and Israel, but also among regional and international actors seeking to secure a role in shaping the region's future.[111]

Humanitarian Dimensions and Reconstruction as a Political Instrument

Over the course of 2024 and 2025, "reconstruction" emerged as one of the most intricate instruments of political pressure directed at the popular base of the resistance in GS. International and regional actors conditioned the effective launch of reconstruction on progress in the "demilitarization of Gaza" and the establishment of a new civilian administration.[112] Moreover, reports in 2024 documented Israeli efforts to establish a "maritime pier" and tightly controlled humanitarian corridors, with the apparent aim of bypassing existing Palestinian institutions and exercising direct control over the civilian lifeline.[113]

By 2025, particularly with the emergence of the "Trump Plan," the reconstruction file shifted from a predominantly "relief-oriented" phase to one centered on "conditional investment." In this context, proposals were advanced to establish an "international fund for the reconstruction of Gaza," to be administered by an international advisory board, thereby effectively marginalizing the role of the PA and the PLO in the Strip's development trajectory.[114] Against this backdrop, Palestinian legal experts cautioned that such initiatives could serve to legitimize a form of "economic trusteeship" in exchange for the provision of basic needs to the population.[115]

Domestically, GS in early 2025 experienced a state of "fragile stability" on the humanitarian front. In this context, Israel sought to exploit the issue of "commercial permits" and the entry of goods to strengthen the influence of local and clan-based actors outside established factional structures, an approach widely described as an attempt to revive the "Village Leagues" through economic channels.[116] Simultaneously, UNRWA continued to face significant pressure as part of broader efforts to shape the "day-after" scenario, with international support sharply reduced in favor of private international organizations aligned with the emerging US security and political framework.[117]

Overall, it is evident that the reconstruction agenda in 2025 extended beyond technical or humanitarian concerns; it functioned as a form of "soft power" designed to achieve what military means had failed to secure, namely, political concessions that undermine the core of Palestinian national rights. As a result, the population of GS remained trapped between the ruins of war and the conditionalities imposed by "donors," which directly threatened their political agency and collective identity.[118]

Fifth: Palestinians of 1948 Occupied Territories and the Diaspora

Palestinians of 1948 Occupied Territories

Throughout 2024 and 2025, Palestinians in the 1948 occupied territories were subjected to an unprecedented Israeli campaign of repression, meticulously designed to intimidate the community and discourage any engagement with the ongoing atrocities in GS. Since 7/10/2023, Israeli authorities have carried out arrests and investigations targeting approximately three thousand Palestinians, including formal indictments, administrative detentions and the criminalization of political and civil activities, with the objective of isolating the internal community from its broader national context.[119] Despite this stringent security clampdown, Palestinians within these territories exhibited remarkable "national steadfastness," endeavoring to safeguard their presence while affirming their identity and national belonging.

These bleak conditions were clearly reflected in political participation. In the local council elections of February 2024, voter turnout declined to 49%, down from 56% in the previous cycle, with particularly sharp drops in major cities such as Nazareth and Umm al-Fahm, where turnout fell from 79% to 49%.[120] Analysts attribute this decline both to the impact of the war on GS, which dominated the public sphere, as well as the spread of organized violence and crime, tolerated by Israeli authorities, which served to weaken social cohesion and Palestinian political engagement.

Nonetheless, despite these repressive measures, large numbers of Palestinians of the 1948 occupied territories joined the nationwide march organized by the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens in Israel to protest Israel's ongoing war on GS. This was the first major demonstration following a series of police restrictions limiting participation to 500 people. Yet thousands attended, demonstrating the community's collective mobilization.[121]

Under the slogan "Stop the War on Gaza," Palestinians of the 1948 occupied territories marked the 76th anniversary of the *Nakbah* by participating in the 27th annual "March of Return," which became a focal point for protest. Palestinian flags and banners bearing the names of depopulated villages were displayed, accompanied by slogans asserting the refugees' right of return and condemning the

acts of genocide in GS as war crimes. On 1/10/2024, the 1948 occupied territories observed a strike commemorating the 24th anniversary of the Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, while the nationwide march in ‘Arrabah was canceled due to security concerns.

In 2025, popular mobilization among Palestinians of the 1948 occupied territories in solidarity with GS intensified, despite continued Israeli repression. On 24/5/2025, Israeli police dispersed a large demonstration in Umm al-Fahm, which condemned Israel’s aggression in GS and demanded an end to administrative detention.[122] On 27/7/2025, several Palestinian leaders within the Green Line undertook a three-day hunger strike.

Afterwards, 2/8/2025 was a significant day for internal Palestinian activism, as numerous Arab towns within the Green Line held demonstrations under the banner of “Breaking the Silence,” following calls from the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens in Israel, local committees, political factions and student groups. Town entrances and main streets became sites of protest, denouncing Israel’s aggression in GS and its policies of genocide and systematic starvation, with participants prominently displaying black flags.[123]

Palestinians Abroad

Operation al-Aqsa Flood represented a turning point for Palestinians abroad, elevating the diaspora’s role from providing “relief and support” to exerting “strategic influence” on the global narrative and political process. During 2024 and 2025, Palestinians abroad emerged as a significant pressure force, effectively challenging the Israeli narrative in Western capitals despite campaigns of vilification and legal restrictions targeting popular activism, carried out by some European governments and the US. These initiatives demonstrated that the diaspora is not merely an echo of the internal struggle but a genuine partner in advancing the national project, particularly as global recognition of the justice of the Palestine issue grew.[124]

At the same time, Palestinians abroad confronted existential challenges, notably attempts to dismantle UNRWA. National actors abroad viewed these efforts in 2024 and 2025 as a direct attack on the right of return and a move to undermine the definition of the “Palestinian refugee.” In response, Palestinian communities and civil organizations mobilized to reinforce the Palestinian narrative and assert

that the refugee issue remains central to the conflict and cannot be compromised, despite international pressure to link humanitarian aid to political concessions.

Regionally, Palestinians abroad faced an urgent need to assume a strategic role in response to shifting Arab and international policies, particularly amid concerns that potential "regional deals" might bypass core Palestinian fundamentals. Experts at an Al-Zaytouna Centre panel discussion on 22/10/2025 argued that the so-called "marginalization syndrome" previously imposed on the diaspora was decisively broken in 2025, due to the alignment of popular movements in Europe and Latin America with the pulse of the streets in GS and WB. This convergence established the Palestinians abroad as a significant actor in any forthcoming political equation.[125] By the end of 2025, Palestinians abroad became increasingly determined to reclaim a leading role within the unified national institution.

The latter half of 2025 witnessed notable progress toward institutionalizing national work abroad. In November 2025, following the Third Palestinian National Dialogue Forum in Istanbul, which brought together national communities, forces and figures from 28 countries, the National Commission for Palestinian Popular Action (NCPPA) was launched. This authority was launched with the participation of four major national conferences, Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad (PCPA), the Palestinian Popular Conference – 14 Million, National Conference for Palestine (NCP) and Union of Palestinian Communities of Latin America (UPAL), providing the broadest organizational framework for representing Palestinians both in the diaspora and within Palestine.[126]

According to its founding statement, the body seeks to foster strategic action that effectively supports the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in GS and WB while confronting the Israeli plans of annexation and displacement that intensified in 2025. Despite official attempts to marginalize these popular initiatives, NCPPA has established itself as a central actor in shaping grassroots national decision-making, affirming the Palestinian people's right to manage their affairs and determine their future free from foreign tutelage or political monopolization.

This institutional role has been manifested through coordinated media campaigns exposing the crimes of genocide and advancing the prisoners' cause in international forums, capitalizing on the growing "international isolation" of Israel. The formation of NCPPA was not merely administrative but a necessary response to the post-Operation al-Aqsa Flood period, which required Palestinians abroad to

assume leadership in safeguarding the national narrative and supporting resistance politically and on the ground. By the end of 2025, Palestinian popular action had consolidated a model of "effective coordination" that transcends geography and unites around the fundamentals of liberation and return.

The reform and reconstruction of the PLO "on democratic foundations" constituted a central pillar of political mobilization among Palestinians within Palestine and abroad in 2025. In this regard, opposition intensified against the monopolization of national decision-making and the deliberate paralysis of representative institutions. On 30/10/2025, four Palestinian conferences, namely PCPA, the Palestinian Popular Conference–14 Million, NCP and UPAL, issued a strongly worded statement entitled "Together to Annul the Illegitimate Decree and Affirm the People's Right to Choose Their Leadership." The statement unequivocally rejected presidential decrees aimed at transferring authority "from one individual to another" outside the framework of popular will.[127]

Nevertheless, despite the official PA leadership's continued insistence on top-down appointments, national forces both within Palestine and abroad advanced an alternative vision centered on the establishment of a "unified national leadership" or a "transitional constituent council." This framework would encompass all political forces and social constituencies, including resistance factions, through comprehensive elections representing Palestinians worldwide. Moreover, strategic discussions underscored that the continued exclusion of Palestinians abroad from decision-making within the PLO is increasingly undermining the effectiveness of the national project, particularly in light of regional and international transformations that require leadership endowed with full political and legal legitimacy.

By the end of 2025, field evidence indicates that the Palestinian landscape is moving toward a more "comprehensive mode of confrontation," in which the boundaries between Palestinians within Palestine and abroad are increasingly blurred. In the case of the Palestinians of the 1948 occupied territories, Israel has continued to intensify policies of repression and security surveillance, with the aim of marginalizing their engagement with issues concerning Jerusalem, GS and the WB. Nevertheless, Israel's failure to weaken or marginalize "national identity" suggests the possibility of renewed popular mobilization, potentially in the form of civil disobedience or politically driven protest movements, particularly in light of the deepening crisis of confidence in Israeli institutions.

With respect to the Palestinians abroad, the NCPPA faces the critical task of translating global solidarity into tangible political pressure. Despite logistical and political constraints, the expanding role of Palestinian communities in the West, together with their growing ability to influence decision-making processes and international judicial outcomes, positions the diaspora as a significant "strategic asset" in safeguarding the national project. Accordingly, the increasing integration between Palestinians within Palestine and abroad contributes to redefining Palestinian political identity in the face of ongoing efforts at liquidation.

Sixth: Public Opinion Polls and Trends Among Palestinians in WB and GS

Public opinion polls conducted in 2024–2025 by PSR[128] indicate widespread dissatisfaction among Palestinians in the WB and GS with President Mahmud 'Abbas and the PA, which an overwhelming majority perceives as corrupt. Moreover, throughout the war period, Hamas consistently outperformed Fatah across all indicators, including presidential and legislative preferences, as well as levels of trust and satisfaction with performance. At the same time, respondents expressed strong opposition to the disarmament of Hamas, even when framed as a condition for preventing renewed war, while a majority continued to support its decision to launch the 7/10/2023 attack. Taken together, these findings call into question claims that Hamas bears primary responsibility for the hardships endured by Palestinians. Notwithstanding the unprecedented scale of suffering and destruction, public opinion has remained largely focused on attributing responsibility to Israel and its US ally, with combined percentages ranging between 78% and 87% across five surveys conducted in 2024–2025. By contrast, attribution of blame to Hamas remained comparatively limited, ranging between 7% and 14%. Furthermore, according to Public Opinion Poll 96 (22–25/10/2025), 36% of Palestinians reported that, two years after the Gaza war, their support for Hamas had increased, whether moderately or significantly, in addition to its already substantial pre-war support base.

With regard to public satisfaction with the performance of Palestinian actors during the war (Operation al-Aqsa Flood), the same five surveys consistently show that Hamas commanded the highest approval ratings by a substantial margin,

ranging from 57% to 75%, with an overall average of 64.6%. In contrast, Fatah's approval ranged between 24% and 30% (averaging 26.2%), while satisfaction with President Mahmud 'Abbas remained markedly lower, fluctuating between 10% and 21%, with an average of 15.6%.

Moreover, the surveys reveal a clear electoral advantage for Hamas-affiliated candidates, whether Isma'il Haniyyah, Yahya Sinwar, or Khalid Mish'al, over Mahmud 'Abbas in presidential contests. Support for a Hamas candidate ranged between 63% and 76%, compared to 20% to 27% for 'Abbas. Notably, however, when Marwan Barghouthi is included, he emerges as the leading candidate, at times with margins comparable to those of Hamas nominees. This pattern reflects a longstanding trend in Palestinian public opinion, as Barghouthi embodies a unifying national symbolism that departs from 'Abbas's "Oslo-oriented" approach, aligns with the resistance line, and transcends factional divisions.

Regarding support for Palestinian factions, the surveys indicate that Hamas received between 32% and 40%, Fatah between 17% and 24%, and other groups between 7% and 12%, while those undecided or without a position ranged between 32% and 40%. Were new legislative elections held on the survey date with the participation of all political forces, Hamas would secure between 42.9% and 46.4% of the vote, Fatah between 21.5% and 30%, and all other factions combined between 5.8% and 10%. These results underscore Hamas's dominance in the Palestinian popular sphere and its clear readiness to assume leadership in any free election throughout 2024–2025. Given that most other factions (PIJ, PFLP, DFLP and the Palestinian National Initiative (PNI), etc.) also support the resistance and reject the Oslo Accords, it is evident that a majority of Palestinians back the resistance and its program. This explains the PLO and PA leadership's persistent reluctance to pursue genuine reconciliation, institutional reform and democratic restructuring, as well as their resistance to true partnership with Hamas and other resistance forces in elections. Fundamentally, any free and fair election would transfer PLO and national leadership to the resistance, thereby undermining the current leadership's position and perceived "legitimacy."

This analysis highlights profound dissatisfaction with President 'Abbas, who consolidates leadership of the PLO, PA, Fatah and the Palestinian state, while controlling both executive and legislative authority through decrees. Between 2024 and 2025, opinion polls indicated that 80–88% of respondents favored his

resignation from the PA presidency, a decisive majority that included segments of Fatah's grassroots.

Notably, an overwhelming majority believes that there is corruption in the PA institutions. An October 2025 poll indicated that 80% held this view; among respondents in the WB, who live directly under PA administration, the figure rises to 92%. Furthermore, a majority believes that the PA has become a burden on the Palestinian people (60% in May 2025 and 56% in October 2025).

These indicators point to a structural imbalance within the Palestinian leadership, political and representative framework. More specifically, they suggest that the current leadership does not constitute a genuinely representative body of the Palestinian people, as it fails to adequately reflect their concerns, aspirations and political orientations. Instead, a clear disconnect has emerged between this leadership and its broader constituency. Notably, the available data and evidence indicate that similar patterns largely extend to Palestinians abroad.

Taken together, these findings point to a pronounced "crisis of representation." While Arab and Muslim countries, alongside the international community and donor actors, continue to engage with the "official leadership," empirical evidence and field realities suggest that this leadership operates in "relative isolation" from popular sentiment. In contrast, "field legitimacy" has emerged as the foremost political reality. Accordingly, any future national project must carefully account for the implications of these findings, and Arab, Islamic and international actors must adopt a more realistic approach, grounded in the authentic sentiments of the Palestinian people.

Professional Union Elections in WB

In 2024, Palestinian professional unions in WB experienced a marked stagnation in their democratic processes. The ongoing genocide in GS and escalating aggression in WB produced a complex security and logistical environment that prevented elections from occurring as scheduled. This was particularly evident in the Palestinian Bar Association and the Engineers Association, where existing boards were automatically extended under the pretext of a "state of emergency," reinforcing the status quo and constraining democratic space.

By mid-2024, union members increasingly advocated for alternative mechanisms, such as electronic voting, to bypass the geographical fragmentation

imposed by Israel. Nevertheless, these proposals met official resistance, reflecting concerns over losing control amid growing public dissatisfaction with PA policies. As a result, professional unions shifted from forums of democratic engagement to "administrative bodies," awaiting political or operational developments that might restore their electoral vitality.

In the first half of 2025, independent union movements emerged beyond traditional structures, leading widespread protests against rising living costs and delayed wages. The Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions played a central role in documenting the plight of workers in the 1948 occupied territories who lost their work permits due to the war. Over 200 thousand workers reportedly joined the ranks of the unemployed, shifting the unions from advocacy bodies to institutions managing a "survival crisis."[129]

Student Council Elections

Throughout 2024, universities in WB served as a "key arena" for assessing political balances and shifts in public sentiment. Amid the ongoing war in GS, student council elections transcended their conventional representative function, effectively becoming a "national referendum" on the choice between resistance and the peace process. This dynamic was particularly evident at Birzeit University, where the elections revealed pronounced polarization. The Islamic Loyalty Bloc, affiliated with Hamas, retained a strong presence despite extensive arrest campaigns targeting its members by both Israel and PA security forces.[130]

However, the military realities on the ground in 2025 effectively forced the suspension of electoral processes in universities in the northern WB, including An-Najah National University and Palestine Technical University – Kadoorie. Repeated Israeli incursions, coupled with the siege of urban centers, curtailed public student activity. Nevertheless, this disruption did not prevent student blocs from fulfilling their national role. Rather, student movements assumed a leading position in mobilizing popular support for GS, with university campuses increasingly serving as sites of confrontation and national mobilization.[131]

Consequently, 2024 concluded with a marked reordering of priorities within university spaces, as traditional service-oriented agendas receded in favor of a more pronounced emphasis on the "field-based national stance," which has emerged as the principal source of political leverage and legitimacy, as well as the central axis of competition among student blocs.[132]

Seventh: Palestinian–Israeli Security Coordination and Its Domestic Implications

The events of 7/10/2023, followed by the war on GS and escalating tensions in the WB, represented the most stringent test of the PA's security coordination doctrine. Although coordination was "officially" suspended at certain moments of protest, evidence from 2024 suggests the persistence of "field-level" arrangements. These, in turn, were justified by the imperative of "preventing a comprehensive security breakdown" and containing the spread of armed resistance into major urban centers in WB.

This continuity was evident in the ability of the PA security forces to contain mass protest mobilizations and prevent their escalation toward areas of confrontation with Israel during peak phases of the offensive. Resistance factions, by contrast, characterized this role as "functional," arguing that it effectively shields Israel and undermines popular mobilization in support of GS. Conversely, official discourse justified these practices as necessary to safeguard PA institutions and to avoid providing Israel with a pretext to reoccupy "Area A" and further dismantle what remains of the national infrastructure.[133]

By 2025, however, the gap between the security apparatus and the broader public had further widened. Perceptions of security coordination increasingly shifted from a "political necessity" to a direct "national burden," particularly as Israel continued conducting targeted assassinations and incursions into RCs without any intervention by PA security forces to protect civilians.

The continuation of security coordination in 2024 and 2025 did not derive solely from an internal "official" Palestinian decision, but rather from an "intensified framework" of international and regional pressures that placed the PA in a highly constrained position. In this context, the US and the European Union (EU), as key donors, exerted direct leverage by conditioning the continuation of financial and political support on "reforming the PA security forces" and ensuring their effectiveness in preventing armed activity in WB. Consequently, security decision-making became closely tied to external funding streams that constitute a vital lifeline for PA institutions.

Within this framework, the 2024 "Lieutenant General Michael Fenzel" plan, the US security coordinator for Israel and the PA, emerged as a central component. The

plan aimed to train and equip specialized Palestinian security units for deployment in areas of tension such as Jenin and Nablus, not to protect them from Israeli incursions, but rather to enforce "security control" and prevent the formation of "resistance brigades." The plan was met with broad popular rejection and was widely perceived as an attempt to "localize" the conflict and draw Palestinians into an internal confrontation under the guise of "reform" and "international obligations."[134]

In addition, Israel has used "clearance revenues" as a persistent instrument of coercion. Thus, whenever public pressure mounted to end security coordination, it threatened to financially constrain the PA, thereby reinforcing the latter's reliance on coordination as a "necessity option" to preserve institutional continuity. In 2025, reports indicated that this dynamic had generated a form of "security dependency," significantly limiting the PA's political maneuverability and positioning its security forces in tension with its own social base, while accommodating external actors who conceive Palestinian security primarily as a "functional mechanism" for maintaining Israel's stability.[135]

Furthermore, the impact of security coordination intensified throughout 2024 and 2025, functioning both as a mechanism of "containment" and as a persistent source of societal friction. Over long years, it has ceased to be a merely high-level political issue and has instead become an everyday reality that increasingly clashes with the rising momentum of resistance in WB towns and RCs. Field reports from 2024 also documented a growing number of confrontations between security forces and armed groups, particularly in Jenin and Nablus, where PA security forces undertook sustained efforts to dismantle explosive devices planted to counter Israeli incursions. These incidents, in turn, led to regrettable internal clashes that further strained the social fabric.[136]

This security conduct has left deep scars on the condition of "civil peace," as early signs of declining trust in the official security apparatus have become increasingly evident. Accordingly, both factional and popular voices have emerged, calling either for alignment with popular demands or, at minimum, for "strict neutrality" on the part of the security forces. In 2025, human rights organizations documented a rise in complaints regarding the failure to protect citizens from escalating settler violence, in stark contrast to the intensified pursuit of political activists and individuals affiliated with resistance-linked blocs. This divergence

has, in turn, fostered a growing sense of "national alienation" among significant segments of youth.[137]

From a sociological standpoint, security coordination has thus evolved into a mechanism that deepens the "vertical cleavage" within Palestinian society. While the ruling elite continues to frame it as essential for preserving institutional continuity and averting internal chaos, public opinion, exceeding 70% in 2025 surveys, largely perceives it as a blow to popular steadfastness and a structural obstacle to the emergence of a unified national leadership capable of confronting the war on GS.[138]

The issue of "political detention" during 2024 and 2025 constituted a significant rupture in the fabric of national unity, as arrests targeting activists, released prisoners, and university students intensified on the basis of political affiliation or expressions of support for resistance. Although the PA denied the existence of "political detainees," insisting instead that those detained were "held on legal grounds," reports by Al-Haq organization indicate that most arrests were conducted without clear legal warrants and were often justified through broad charges such as "stirring unrest" or "illegal possession of weapons."

Legally, 2025 also witnessed a marked increase in court orders for the release of detainees, which were frequently not implemented by security agencies through what is commonly termed "detention at the discretion of the governor." Human rights organizations have described this practice as an overt encroachment by the executive on judicial authority and a direct erosion of the rule of law. As a result, hunger strikes within PA detention facilities increased, bringing the issue under intensified scrutiny from international and human rights bodies.[139]

Politically, the prisoners' issue has been instrumentalized as a bargaining tool in reconciliation negotiations. Hamas and PIJ have repeatedly demanded the release of prisoners as a prerequisite for the success of the "Beijing Declaration." Nevertheless, the persistence of arrests has underscored that the prevailing "security doctrine," grounded in coordination, continues to override considerations of national partnership. By the end of 2025, this issue remained a central impediment to meaningful rapprochement, while also constituting a key source of popular frustration, particularly amid perceptions that the pursuit of resistance members and activists amounts to a form of "free service" to Israel's objective of fragmenting the internal front.[140]

In conclusion, security coordination remains a "tense fault line" that threatens the cohesion of the national fabric. Its resolution appears contingent upon reorienting security decision-making toward a "comprehensive liberation project," and, more fundamentally, upon reshaping the prevailing security doctrine from one oriented toward "safeguarding Israeli or international commitments" into one centered on "protecting Palestinian existence" on its own land.[141]

Conclusion

The two years of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, 2024 and 2025, were markedly turbulent across all levels and are likely to generate significant and long-term repercussions shaping the Palestinian landscape in the years ahead. Accordingly, Palestinian actors face pressing imperatives to redefine their visions and strategic orientations for a new phase, in which external influence is increasingly pronounced and challenges have taken on an increasingly existential character, thereby placing the future of the Palestine issue and the broader Palestinian national project under mounting strain.

In light of the rapidly evolving regional and international political, security and economic dynamics, and based on an assessment of the behavior of Palestinian actors alongside the orientations of key regional and international stakeholders, as well as the interaction of political, economic and security variables, several projections regarding future internal Palestinian developments may be advanced. Chief among these is the following:

1. It is expected that the PA leadership will continue to seek to persuade international actors of the credibility of its reform agenda, with a view to sustaining its role in governing the WB and, eventually, reasserting authority over GS. At the same time, US and Israel pressure is likely to persist, with the aim of securing additional concessions from the PA on an ongoing basis.
2. In light of the Israeli governing coalition's hardline right-wing orientation toward the PA, uncertainty over the future of Palestinian governance has increased significantly. This is further compounded by Israel's efforts to develop alternative local arrangements for administering the WB, alongside its accelerating policies of land seizure and de facto annexation. In parallel, the Trump administration's

push to place GS under international tutelage and oversight adds another layer of external pressure. Taken together, these developments underscore the growing ambiguity surrounding the future political role of the PA in both the WB and GS in the coming period.

3. It is expected that the NCAG, established under President Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict and the ceasefire agreement, will begin its work despite Israeli obstacles. Hamas and other resistance factions have expressed a degree of willingness to facilitate its functioning and ensure its success. Nevertheless, the committee's ability to fulfil its mandate in serving the population of GS remains constrained by ongoing Israeli pressure and obstruction, as well as by its subordination to the direct oversight of the executive administration of the "Board of Peace (BoP)," which functions as the de facto governing authority for GS, in addition to Israel's and the US's preoccupation with reshaping regional dynamics in Lebanon, Syria and Iran... .
4. Prospects for reaching an agreement on the future of resistance arms remain constrained by the wide divergence of positions among the relevant parties. Nonetheless, mediation efforts by key regional actors are likely to persist, with the aim of formulating more flexible approaches to overcome this impasse. Concurrently, available indicators suggest that Israel will continue its military operations in GS, refuse withdrawal, and seek to impose a new operational framework that preserves its freedom to act militarily and securitarily without meaningful constraint.

   In this light, the "day after" in GS appears not as a settled outcome but rather as an open-ended and evolving struggle, with trajectories that remain wide open. Whereas Israel appears to rely on a strategy of "socioeconomic exhaustion" and the domestication of civil administration, Palestinians, by contrast, are placing their bets on sustained "steadfastness on the ground" to counter projects of external tutelage and domination. Against this backdrop, 2026 is likely to constitute a decisive test of the Palestinian political system's capacity for renewal and its ability to assert agency amid an "intensifying wave" of international initiatives.[142]
5. Despite sustained Israeli and US efforts to isolate Hamas and exclude it from the political landscape in both WB and GS, the movement is likely to remain a central national actor. It is expected to continue adapting to mounting pressures

and overcoming the challenges it faces. Furthermore, Hamas will likely deepen its institutional, consultative governance model to mitigate leadership losses, while simultaneously consolidating field alliances with other resistance forces in order to form a "national bloc" capable of influencing the parameters of post-war arrangements. Notwithstanding regional pressures, its growing popular support will render its exclusion from national decision-making increasingly untenable.

As for Fatah and the PA, the coming period will constitute a critical test for them, particularly with regard to the capacity of internal currents to advance a reform trajectory that curtails "unilateral dominance." In the absence of substantive change, the crisis of legitimacy is likely to deepen further.

The popular sentiment in support of the resistance trajectory is likely to continue gaining momentum, thereby consolidating a clear and increasingly broad majority over the camp aligned with the peace process.

6. As 2025 draws to a close, the Palestinian political landscape appears increasingly defined by the entrenched reality of "intractable reconciliation" and the persistent absence of national consensus, notwithstanding the fact that existential pressures have reached unprecedented levels. Indeed, the experience of the past two years has demonstrated that prospects for reconciliation remain constrained by structural factors that extend well beyond the capacity of the Palestinian factions. International "vetoes" and Israeli conditions function as decisive impediments to any meaningful convergence beyond temporary humanitarian or ad operational coordination.

   While Gaza has reinforced a sense of "unity of destiny," PA institutions in the WB have remained committed to political frameworks that are increasingly misaligned with the emerging discourse of "revolutionary legitimacy." Consequently, this divergence has consolidated a shift from a traditional factional divide (Fatah–Hamas) toward a deeper structural cleavage between an "official diplomatic orientation" and a "popular, resistance-centered paradigm."[143] In this context, the most plausible scenario is the persistence of fragmentation and political divergence, as there are currently no substantive indicators of imminent rapprochement or a durable resolution of the Palestinian internal schism.

7. It is likely that the PLO and its institutions will remain structurally paralysed and ineffective, owing to the PA president's continued monopoly over political

decision-making, his refusal to reconstruct and revitalise the organisation, and the exclusion of key Palestinian factions from its framework. This dynamic is further entrenched by restrictive conditions linked to recognition of so-called "international legitimacy," particularly acceptance of the Oslo Accords and the PA's security commitments, despite their contradiction with the same framework's affirmation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Accordingly, most Palestinian factions reject any arrangements that run counter to the free will of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination, including the election of their leadership and representative institutions.

8. While existing evidence points to the continued Israeli repression and policing strategies aimed at further marginalising the role of Palestinians of the 1948 occupied territories in engaging with developments in GS and WB, Palestinian communities are nevertheless expected to persist in asserting their national identity. In parallel, they are also expected to maintain active engagement with Palestinian political affairs in the period ahead.
9. The establishment of the NCPPA is anticipated to contribute to the consolidation of coordination mechanisms among Palestinian national conferences and independent figures, while also strengthening the role of the Palestinian diaspora within the broader framework of national mobilization.
10. It is likely that tensions and mutual accusations between Palestinian factions will persist, owing to enduring political divergence between those aligned with the PA leadership and those aligned with resistance factions that uphold national fundamentals, the option of resistance, and confrontation with Israel. In the absence of any meaningful signs of rapprochement, there is little prospect of substantive improvement in relations between the two sides in the foreseeable future.
11. It is increasingly likely that the continuation of security coordination in its traditional form will encounter mounting constraints amid the rise of the far-right in Israel, which no longer appears content with coordination alone. Rather, it has sought to undermine the PA itself and reconstitute its institutions as limited "village leagues" structures. In this context, the PA leadership is confronted with a stark dilemma: either acquiescence to functional erosion or a recalibration toward prevailing popular sentiment.

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Chapter Two

Palestinian Demographic and Economic Indicators

Palestinian Demographic and Economic Indicators

Introduction

During 2024–2025, the Palestinian people witnessed an unprecedented escalation in both the scale and intensity of Israeli aggression, culminating in a genocidal war waged on GS since October 2023. This campaign was characterized by the widespread destruction of critical infrastructure, the large-scale killing of civilians, and the systematic targeting of essential means of survival, including housing, educational and healthcare institutions, and productive economic sectors. Furthermore, it was accompanied by a deliberate policy of starvation and a suffocating blockade, which collectively transformed GS into a catastrophic environment threatening human existence as a whole.

Concurrently, the WB was not insulated from these developments; rather, it experienced a parallel escalation in Israeli measures. This was reflected in the intensification of settlement expansion, land confiscation and restrictions on movement, alongside extensive arrest campaigns. In addition, the targeting of Islamic and Christian holy sites further compounded the crisis, thereby deepening Palestinian vulnerabilities and accelerating the deterioration of living conditions.

This chapter seeks to provide an updated statistical overview of the Palestinian people, both within their homeland and abroad, in light of the exceptional conditions imposed by the war and Israeli policies. In addition to pre-existing challenges, about half of the Palestinian people reside under occupation and blockade in their homeland, while the other half continues to experience conditions of refuge and displacement in the diaspora. Nevertheless, the analysis relies on available official data, particularly from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and PA institutions, supplemented by reports from international organizations, in order to produce an assessment that is as rigorous and objective as possible.

The second part of the chapter, in turn, examines economic conditions in the WB and GS during 2024–2025. It underscores the structural transformations induced by the war, assesses the scale of losses and damage across productive and service sectors, and considers their implications for future development prospects and the economic capacity of the Palestinian people.

First: Demographic Indicators

1. The Palestinian Population Worldwide

Available estimates, based on PCBS data, indicate that the global Palestinian population reached about 15.49 million by the end of 2025, up from 14.89 million at the end of 2024, an increase of 4.06% (see table 1/2).

According to 2025 estimates, Palestinians are distributed by place of residence into those living in historic Palestine, about 7.412 million, constituting 47.9% of the global Palestinian population. This group comprises about 5.557 million in the 1967 occupied territories, or about 35.9% of Palestinians worldwide, while Palestinians in the 1948 occupied territories (Israel) are about 1.855 million, or about 12% of Palestinians worldwide (see table 1/2).

In the Diaspora, Palestinians are estimated at about 8.077 million by the end of 2025, accounting for about 52.1% of the global Palestinian population. According to data from researchers at al-Zaytouna Centre, Palestinians in Jordan (the vast majority of whom hold Jordanian citizenship) are about 4.878 million, or about 31.5% of Palestinians worldwide and about 60.4% of Palestinian Diaspora. In other Arab countries, the Palestinian population is about 1.941 million, representing about 12.5% of Palestinians worldwide, with most concentrated in neighbouring Arab states, particularly Lebanon, Syria, the Gulf countries, and Egypt (see table 1/2).

According to PCBS, Palestinians in foreign countries are approximated at 1.259 million, accounting for 8.1% of the global Palestinian population, with the majority residing in the US, Latin America, Canada, UK and other EU, countries.

It is important to note that these estimates may be outdated, and subject to inaccuracies. When considering the emigration of Palestinians from Arab countries over the past three decades (including countries surrounding Israel, the Gulf states and Libya), along with movements from Palestine to other regions, discrepancies in previous global Palestinian population estimates become apparent. For example, some estimates[1] suggest that there are over 600 thousand Palestinians in South America, with at least 300 thousand residing in Chile. Additionally, the Palestinian population in Europe is estimated to be not less than 350–400 thousand, while in North America there are approximately 300–350 thousand Palestinians, with at least 100 thousand in other countries. Based on these revised estimates, the global Palestinian population (excluding Palestine and the Arab world) is estimated to be between 1.35 million to 1.45 million, exceeding PCBS estimates by roughly

90–190 thousand. Accordingly, researchers and specialists face a demanding yet necessary task of producing more accurate and reliable estimates of the global Palestinian population, based on updated statistical methods and multiple data sources.

By the end of 2024, according to PCBS statistics, the global Palestinian population stood at 14.89 million, with 5.49 million residing in WB and GS, and around 1.793 million in the 1948 occupied territories (Israel), compared to 7.602 million living abroad; specifically 4.787 million in Jordan, 1.618 million in other Arab countries and 1.197 million in foreign countries (see table 1/2).

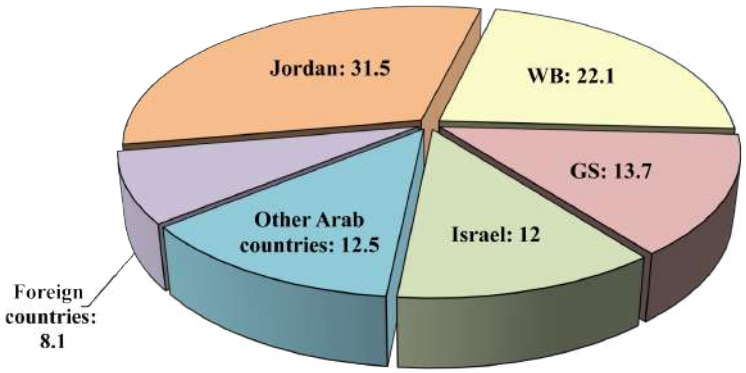
Table 1/2: Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate by Place of Residence at the End of 2024 and 2025 (thousands)[2]

Place of residence		2024		2025	
		Population estimates	Percentage (%)	Population estimates	Percentage (%)
Palestinian territories occupied in 1967	WB	3,360.6	22.6	3,430.1	22.1
	GS	2,129.7	14.3	2,127	13.7
Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)*		1,793.4	12	1,855.4	12
Palestinians in historic Palestine		**7,283.7**	**48.9**	**7,412.4**	**47.9**
Jordan**		4,786.7	32.2	4,877.6	31.5
Other Arab countries		1,617.9	10.9	1,940.8	12.5
Foreign countries		1,197.5	8	1,258.7	8.1
Palestinians abroad		**7,602.1**	**51.1**	**8,077.1**	**52.1**
Total		**14,885.8**	**100**	**15,489.6**	**100**

* For the Palestinian population in the 1948 occupied territories, the count excludes Palestinians in the 1967 occupied territories, which includes the Jerusalem governorate, Arab Syrians, Lebanese, non-Arab Christians and individuals classified as "Others." Israeli statistics present figures that deviate from those of the PCBS, indicating that the number of Arab Palestinians in the 1948 occupied territories amounted to approximately 2.147 million in 2025. When subtracting the 405 thousand East Jerusalem residents and approximately 25 thousand individuals in the Golan Heights, the adjusted total stands at around 1.74 million.

** The Palestinian population in Jordan is based on 2009 PCBS statistics, which reported a figure of 3,240,473. Subsequent calculations take into account the annual growth rates spanning from 2009 to 2024, as provided by the Jordanian Department of Statistics, Population and Housing, Demographic Statistics, ranging between 3.1% and 1.9%. For more information, refer to https://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/

Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate by Place of Residence at the End of 2025 (%)



2. The Demographic Characteristics of the Palestinians

a. The WB and GS

By the conclusion of 2025, the Palestinian population in WB and GS was estimated at 5.557 million, with approximately 3.43 million residing in WB (61.7%) and 2.127 million (38.3%) in GS. This reflects an annual growth rate of 1.2%, considering that the combined Palestinian population in WB and GS stood at 5.49 million at the end of 2024.

Population growth in the WB and GS is driven mainly by demographic expansion in the WB, where the population rose from about 3.36 million at the end of 2024 to about 3.43 million by the end of 2025. By contrast, the population of GS slightly declined from approximately 2.129 million to 2.127 million over the same period. This decrease is attributed to the genocidal war on the Strip and its severe demographic impact, with a net population loss estimated at about 254 thousand Palestinians, or 10.6% in 2025 compared to pre-war estimates.[3]

The sharp demographic contraction in GS is further explained by large-scale human losses and forced displacement resulting from the genocidal war. According to figures from the Palestinian Ministry of Health, 70,942 Palestinians were killed in GS, including 18,592 children and 12,400 women, in addition to about 11 thousand missing persons, while around 171,195 people were injured by the end of December 2025. Moreover, more than 100 thousand Palestinians left GS since

the start of the Israeli assault on 7/10/2023, further deepening the demographic shift observed in GS by the end of 2025.[4]

As for the distribution of the population across the governorates of the WB and GS in 2025, the figures for GS presented below are hypothetical. Israel has created a new reality through systematic internal displacement during Operation al-Aqsa Flood, resulting in the concentration of large numbers of residents in specific areas, particularly the central region. Based on the above, Hebron Governorate has the largest population in the WB and GS (874.3 thousand, 15.7% of the WB and GS population), followed by Gaza Governorate (718.1 thousand, 12.9% of the WB and GS population), and Jerusalem Governorate (518.1 thousand, about 9.3% of the WB and GS population). By contrast, Jericho and Jordan Rift Valley Governorate records the lowest share, with about 57.8 thousand residents (1% of the WB and GS population). Table 2/2 presents the distribution of the population across the governorates of the WB and GS, based on PCBS estimates.

The Palestinian community in WB and GS is young with over a third of its individuals (36.3%) aged under 15, exhibiting a notable contrast between WB and GS, standing at 34.6% and 39.1%, respectively, by the end of 2025. Statistics indicate that the median age (the age dividing the population into two numerically equal groups, i.e., half of the population is below that age and half is older) in the WB and GS has increased throughout 2010–2025 from 18.5 years to 21.6 years. A separate analysis for the WB and GS during the same period indicates an increase in median age from 19.4 years in 2010 to 22.9 years in 2025 for the WB, and from 17.2 years in 2010 to 19.8 years in 2025 for the GS. This underscores demographic differences between the two areas and gradual shifts in their age structures.[5]

As for the elderly population (60 years and above), they represent a relatively small share of the Palestinian population, accounting for 6.1% of the total population in WB and GS at the end of 2025. This underscores the continued youthful structure of society and the relatively high dependency ratio. The total number of individuals aged 60 and above in WB and GS is about 340.5 thousand. The majority reside in WB, where they number about 232.9 thousand (6.7% of WB population), compared to about 107.6 thousand in GS (5% of GS population).[6]

Table 2/2: Estimated Population Count in WB and GS by Governorate 2024–2025 (thousands)[7]

Governorate	2024		2025	
	Estimates	Percentage (%)	Estimates	Percentage (%)
WB	**3,360.6**	**61.2**	**3,430.1**	**61.7**
Jenin	363.5	6.6	370.5	6.7
Tubas and Northern Rift Valleys	70.9	1.3	72.4	1.3
Tulkarm	211.3	3.8	214.8	3.9
Nablus	443.7	8.1	451.7	8.1
Qalqilya	131.1	2.4	133.9	2.4
Salfit	88.8	1.6	90.8	1.6
Ramallah and al-Bireh	381.2	6.9	388.6	7.1
Jericho and Rift Valley	56.7	1.1	57.8	1
Jerusalem	507.8	9.2	518.1	9.3
Bethlehem	252.2	4.7	257.1	4.6
Hebron	853.4	15.5	874.3	15.7
GS	**2,129.7**	**38.8**	**2,127**	**38.3**
North Gaza*	422.7	7.7	422.1	7.6
Gaza*	719.2	13.1	718.1	12.9
Dayr al-Balah*	301.9	5.5	301.5	5.4
Khan Yunis*	422.7	7.7	422.1	7.6
Rafah*	263.5	4.8	263.1	4.7
Total (WB & GS)	**5,490.3**	**100**	**5,557.1**	**100**

Note: Minor differences may occur due to rounding.

* Hypothetical distribution.

In 2023, data prior to the Israeli aggression on GS (with no available data for 2024 and 2025) showed that about 76% of the elderly (60 years and above) in Palestine suffer from chronic diseases, with around 75% in WB and 78% in GS. The percentage of those suffering from chronic diseases reached about 70% among males and 82% among females. These indicators underscore the healthcare and social care challenges facing older persons in WB and GS, particularly given the population's predominantly youthful structure. The elderly with chronic diseases and the injured in GS are among the most affected groups due to the Israeli aggression. They face significant challenges that could lead to a deterioration in their health because of the cut off medications and healthcare services, as well as the difficulty in accessing hospitals and care centers, especially with many facilities destroyed or out of service. According to data from the Emergency Medical Teams Coordination Cell (EMTCC) and the World Health Organization (WHO), around 58,915 patients with chronic diseases are at risk of their conditions worsening. The total number of required medical evacuations reached 14,469 cases, including 2,497 elderly (aged 60 and above), which includes 1,380 cancer patients and 126 kidney patients, as of 8/9/2024.[8]

In 2023, about 29% of the elderly (60 years and above) did not complete any educational stage; 18% among males and 39% among females, whereas the percentage of the elderly who completed intermediate diploma degree and higher did not exceed 18%. As for the labor force participation rate among older persons, it reached 18% in WB in 2024, compared to 5% in GS in the first three quarters of 2023, underscoring the limited integration of this group into economic activity and its impact on their economic and social independence.[9]

In terms of gender distribution, the male population in WB and GS reached 2.81 million at the end of 2025, compared to 2.74 million females, resulting in a sex ratio of 102.6 males per 100 females. In GS, the male population reached 1.07 million males compared to 1.06 million females, with a sex ratio of 101.1, while in WB, the male population reached 1.74 million compared to 1.69 million females, with a sex ratio of 103.5. Overall, these figures indicate only limited variation in the gender structure between the two areas.[10]

Data illustrated a decline in the dependency rate (the number of dependents per 100 individuals of working age, 15–64 years) in WB and GS from 78.7 in 2010 to 66.7 in 2025. Notably, there was a significant difference in the dependency rate

between the two regions, with rates dropping from 73.7 to 63.1 in WB and from 87.4 to 72.8 in GS between 2010 and 2025. Despite this downward trend, the dependency burden in GS remains significantly higher than in WB.[11]

With regard to life expectancy, available data indicate a continued, albeit modest, improvement in survival levels among Palestinians, with only limited disparities between WB and GS. In 2023, life expectancy at birth reached about 73.6 years for males and 75.8 years for females in WB, compared to 72.9 and 75.1 years, respectively, in GS, reflecting a slight advantage for WB. This improvement is linked to relative progress in healthcare services and declining mortality rates, particularly the infant mortality rate (deaths per thousand live births), which stood at about 11.7 in WB and 12.7 in GS during 2015–2019. It also reflects a decline in the Crude Death Rate (CDR), reaching 3.9 per thousand population in WB in 2025, while available data for 2023 place it at 3.7 per thousand in GS. Together, these trends have contributed to higher life expectancy and improved survival outcomes (see table 3/2).

The natural population growth rate in the WB and GS declined from 3.6% in 2000 to 1.2% in 2025. In 2025, the natural population growth rate decreased to –0.13% in GS and 2.1% in WB (see table 3/2).

In 2023, there was a decrease in the average household size in WB and GS, with the average number of persons per household declining from 5.8 in 2007 to 4.9 in 2023. At the regional level, average household size in WB declined from 5.5 persons in 2007 to 4.7 in 2023, while in GS it dropped from 6.5 persons to 5.3 over the same period.[12] This reflects profound demographic, social and economic shifts, shaped in particular by sustained living pressures and broader structural changes in Palestinian society in recent years.

As for housing density (persons per room), the figure for 2022 was higher in GS compared to WB, with 1.7 persons/ room in GS compared to 1.4 in WB, resulting in a total average housing density of 1.5 persons/ room in both regions, reflecting greater housing pressure in GS. In parallel, about 81% of Palestinian households live in dwellings owned by a family member, with notable variation between the two areas. Homeownership reaches 87.3% in WB compared to 69.8% in GS,[13] highlighting structural differences in housing patterns and ownership capacity between the two contexts.

Marriage registration data show a continued decline in WB in 2023, with 21,420 marriage contracts recorded, compared to 24,263 in 2022, a decrease of 2,843 contracts. These figures are limited to WB, as updated data for GS are unavailable due to the ongoing war and the suspension of Sharia Court operations during the conflict. This precludes updated estimates for the Palestinian territories as a whole and reflects the broader social, demographic and economic disruptions caused by the war and prevailing living conditions. Accordingly, 2022 remains the latest comprehensive reference year, with a total of 43,430 marriage contracts in WB and GS recorded in Sharia Courts and churches, 24,263 in WB and 19,167 in GS, highlighting the geographical disparity in marriage patterns between the two areas.[14]

With regard to education indicators, data from 2023 show that the illiteracy rate in WB and GS stood at 2.1% among individuals aged 15 years and above. This rate has declined for both sexes over recent decades, although a gender gap persists: illiteracy reached 3.2% among females compared to 1.1% among males in 2023, down from 20.3% and 7.8% respectively in 1997. This reflects an overall decline of about 85% over more than two decades, indicating significant improvement in basic education and literacy. Geographically, the illiteracy rate (aged 15 years and above) was 2.1% in WB in 2024 and 1.9% in GS based on 2023 data. These levels are among the lowest globally, especially when compared with West Asia and North Africa, where it reached 19% in 2022, according to UNESCO Institute for Statistics, including 24.6% among females and 13.7% among males. Globally, the rate stood at 13%, with 16.2% among females and 9.7% among males.[15] Overall, this underscores the relative progress achieved in Palestine in education and literacy compared to regional and global benchmarks.

It is important to note that the education sector in WB and GS experienced unprecedented destruction between 2024 and early December 2025, with the impact far more severe in GS due to the widespread and systematic targeting of educational institutions. More than 179 government schools were completely destroyed, while 218 schools were bombed or damaged, including 118 government schools and 100 UNRWA schools. In WB, schools have faced repeated raids and demolition orders, and executed demolition orders, reflecting a systematic tightening of restrictions on the educational environment.[16]

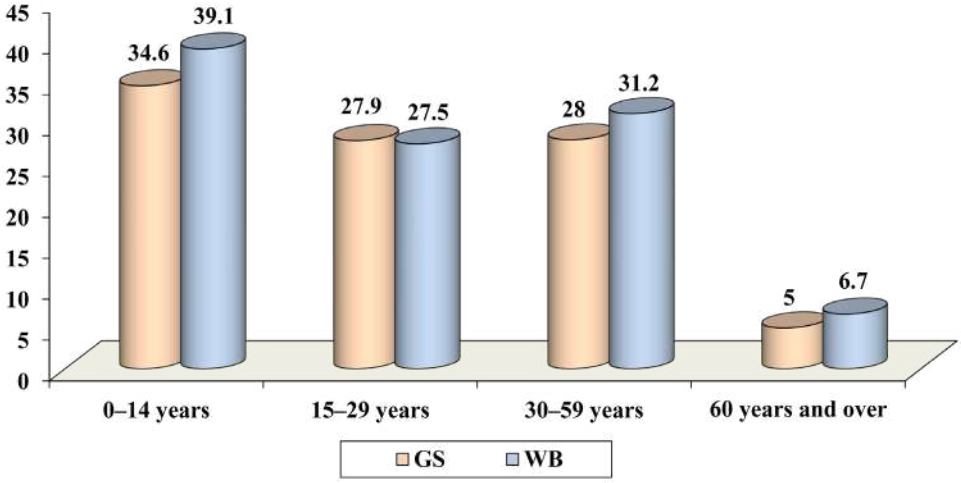
At the higher education level, 63 university buildings in GS were completely destroyed, while 8 universities in WB were subjected to repeated raids and vandalism, disrupting academic processes and undermining institutional infrastructure. The human toll on education is staggering, where 18,979 school students were killed, including 18,863 in GS in addition to 1,399 university students, 797 school teachers and administrative staff, and 241 higher education personnel.[17] This underscores a systematic assault on the education sector at all levels, with far-reaching implications for human capital and the future of national development in WB and GS.

Table 3/2: Selected Demographic Indicators of Palestinians in WB and GS[18]

Indicator		WB	GS	WB & GS
Population density (persons/ km2) (2024)		594	5,836	911
Population growth (2025) (%)		2.1	–0.13	1.2
Average family size (2024)		4.7	5.3 (2023)	4.9 (2023)
Life expectancy at birth (males) (years) (2023)		73.6	72.9	73.3
Life expectancy at birth (females) (years) (2023)		75.8	75.1	75.5
CBR* (births per thousand population) (2025)		25.9	31.1	28
CDR (deaths per thousand population) (2025)		3.9	3.7 (2023)	3.7 (2023)
Infant mortality rate (deaths per thousand live births) (2015–2019)		11.7	12.7	12.1
Average number of rooms in the housing unit		3.6 (2024)	3.5 (2022)	3.5 (2022)
Age structure (%) (2025)	0–14 years	34.6	39.1	36.3
	15–29 years	27.5	27.9	27.6
	30–59 years	31.2	28	30
	60 years and over	6.7	5	6.1
Average housing density (persons/ room) (2024)		1.4	1.7 (2022)	1.5 (2022)

* CBR: Crude Birth Rate

Age Structure in WB and GS 2025 (%)



b. The 1948 Occupied Palestinian Territories (Israel)

PCBS has indicated that Palestinians living in Israel at the end of 2025 were estimated at 1.855 million compared to 1.793 million in 2024. Available data shows that they are a young community in 2023, with individuals aged under 15 representing 30.8% of males and 29.7% of females, while those aged 65 years and over amounted to 5.1% of males and 6.3% of females (see table 4/2).

Available estimates for 2023 indicate that the fertility rate for Palestinians residing in Israel was 2.75 births per woman. As for the average Palestinian household size, it was 4.17 persons. The CBR and CDR reached 21.6 births and 3.2 deaths per thousand respectively, while infant mortality rate was 5.1 deaths per thousand live births. Notably, these figures exclude Arab citizens in the Syrian Golan Heights, citizens in J1 of the Jerusalem governorate, as well as, Lebanese Arabs who have moved to live temporarily in Israel, as they are considered part of the Arab population as a whole (see table 4/2).

Notably, the Palestinian community in the 1948 occupied territories (Israel) has witnessed a sharp rise in homicides in 2024 and 2025. The number of killings reached about 230 cases in 2024, then increased further to between 241 and 252 cases in 2025, the highest level on record among Palestinians in Israel. This escalation is clear in comparison with earlier years: homicides stood at 120 cases

in 2022, then nearly doubled in 2023 to 244 cases, a record at the time.[19] The upward trend is attributed to the spread of armed violence, the expansion of organized crime networks, weak judicial deterrence, and the proliferation of illegal weapons. These factors have fueled a growing sense of insecurity and a pronounced social and security crisis within the Palestinian community in Israel.

According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) data at the end of 2024, Muslims in the 1948 occupied territories counted for 1.82 million, comprising 86% of the population, while Druze counted for 153 thousand and Christians 143 thousand, comprising 7.2% and 6.8% respectively.[20]

c. Jordan

Palestinians living in Jordan at the end of 2025 were estimated at 4.88 million up from 4.79 million at the end of 2024, most of whom hold Jordanian citizenship (Jordanian citizens of Palestinian descent) (see table 1/2).

According to the Jordanian Department of Statistics, annual population growth was 1.9% in 2024, with projections suggesting it will remain stable through the end of 2025. This rate applies to the entire population, including Jordanians of Palestinian origin. Statistics also point to continued demographic shifts over 2020–2025. Fertility among Jordanian women aged 15–49 declined to 2.3 children per woman in 2024, down from 3.03 in 2016. Infant mortality stood at about 14 deaths per thousand live births, and under-5 mortality at around 15 deaths per thousand, based on 2023 data.[21] Jordanians of Palestinian origin are likely to exhibit similar fertility and mortality patterns to the population as a whole.

According to UNRWA, the number of registered Palestine refugees (PRs) at the end of 2024 stood at 5.914 million, of whom 2.371 million reside in Jordan across ten official RCs, accounting for about 40% of the total.[22]

d. Syria

According to UNRWA figures, the total PRs in Syria was 582,746 at the end of 2024, down from 586,842 in 2023. They are distributed across nine official RCs and several informal gatherings across the country.[23] These figures are estimates and may not reflect the actual resident population, as many refugees who have left Syria remain on UNRWA's records.

Following political developments in Syria, most notably the transfer of power after the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government in late 2024, a climate of cautious relief emerged in the region. This coincided with a temporary ceasefire between Israel and Hizbullah in Lebanon after a period of escalation and large-scale displacement. These shifts fostered expectations among Palestinian refugees of modest improvements and limited prospects for return, despite persistent instability. Within this fragile context, Palestine refugee returns to and within Syria during the first half of 2025 exceeded 29 thousand, more than double the approximately 14 thousand recorded over the previous five years combined. Inability to pay rent in displacement and the desire for family reunification were key drivers of returns, even to areas where homes remained partially destroyed, some still lacking walls or electricity, and where public infrastructure remained heavily damaged. Despite this movement, returns have coincided with a sharp decline in living conditions. Food insecurity among Palestinian refugees in Syria increased from 56% in 2023 to 63% in 2024, reaching an unprecedented 92% in 2025, reflecting the continued fragility of the humanitarian and economic context in which these returns are occurring.[24]

According to a report published by the Action Group for Palestinians of Syria (AGPS) in February 2026, about 40% of Palestinian refugees in Syria remained displaced during 2025. The report also indicates that Palestinian fatalities in Syria in 2025 resulted from Israeli airstrikes (38%), explosions (19%), and both clashes and assassinations (14% each). It further estimates that around 23 thousand Palestinian refugees from Syria are in Lebanon, with over 80% living below the extreme poverty line due to the ongoing economic crisis and reduced humanitarian assistance.[25]

In the health sector, an AGPS report indicates that more than 779 thousand refugees are in need of medical assistance, amid a lack of ambulance services and essential medicines in several areas, including Yarmouk RC, which continues to suffer from the dissolution of its local committee since 2018.[26]

In northern Syria, AGPS documented 1,488 families in Idlib and northern rural Aleppo living under difficult conditions. In Deir Ballout and al-Muhammadiya RCs in the Afrin countryside, 80 Palestinian families displaced from southern Damascus are residing in temporary tents lacking adequate health services.[27]

e. Lebanon

According to UNRWA figures, PRs residing in Lebanon at the end of 2024 constituted a total of 486,269, compared to 493,201 at the end of 2023.[28] However, he actual number residing in Lebanon stood at 231,515, of whom 12.1% hold Lebanese citizenship, according to a UNRWA digital identity verification process conducted from mid-2023 to mid-2025. A summary of the findings shows that 204,420 are registered with UNRWA in Lebanon, 23,451 reside in Lebanon but are registered in other UNRWA fields of operation, and 3,644 "do not fall under the Agency 's definition of Palestine Refugees but are recorded as other persons of concern." The population displays balanced sex ratio. Children under 18 account for about 33%, while those aged 65 and above represent around 10%, reflecting a young demographic structure with strong dependence on social assistance and humanitarian services.[29]

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are distributed between official RCs and Palestinian informal gatherings, particularly in the south. Many live in overcrowded conditions with weak infrastructure and high poverty levels. Estimates indicate that over 80% live below the poverty line amid severe economic deterioration, while 94% have benefited from one or more of the Agency's services during the verification period. These demographic features, alongside a youthful age structure, small household sizes, and heavy reliance on humanitarian assistance, highlight the vulnerability of the Palestinian socio-economic and humanitarian situation in Lebanon. This is further exacerbated by legal restrictions on employment and property ownership, which continue to constrain long-term integration and stability.[30]

According to the 2017 Population and Housing Census in the Palestine Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon (the latest official census available), individuals under 15 years constituted about 29% of the population, while those aged 65 and above accounted for around 6.4%, reflecting a predominantly youthful demographic structure. The average household size was about 4 persons, and female-headed households represented 17.5%, a notable indicator in a context of socio-economic vulnerability. The total fertility rate stood at approximately 2.7 births per woman, indicating continued natural population growth despite structural constraints on employment, income and access to basic services.[31]

f. General Comparisons Among Palestinians

Before comparing the major demographic indicators summarized in table 4/2, it's important to note that, some data may pertain to different years, potentially affecting the comparison process. Nevertheless, these data remain valuable as general indicators based on the latest available statistics. The following are the key observations:

- Regarding age structure, the share of young Palestinians (15 years and under) is highest in Jordan (39.9% in 2011), followed by GS (39.1% in 2025), and the combined WB and GS (36.3%). By contrast, the lowest proportions are recorded in Lebanon (29% in 2017) and in the 1948 occupied territories (30.8% for males and 29.7% for females in 2023), indicating clear disparities across Palestinian communities.
- The proportion of the elderly (65 years and above) is highest in Lebanon (6.4%), followed by the 1948 occupied territories (5.1% for males and 6.3% for females), then Syria (4.4%) and the WB (4.2%). In contrast, it remains lowest in GS (3%), underscoring its distinctly youthful demographic structure.
- The sex ratio (males per 100 females) reflects broad demographic balance across regions. It reached 103.5 in the WB, 101.1 in GS, and 102.6 for the WB and GS combined in 2025, compared with about 103.1 in the 1948 occupied territories; similarly, it stood at 100.4 in Syria and 102 in Lebanon. Overall, this indicates a largely balanced gender structure, with a slight male predominance in some areas.
- CBR is highest in GS at 31.1 births per thousand in 2025, followed by Jordan and Syria (29.2 in 2010), then the WB (25.9) and Lebanon (25.8), while the lowest rate was observed in the 1948 occupied territories (21.6). This pattern aligns with persistently higher fertility in GS, thereby intensifying demographic pressures amid limited resources and ongoing blockade.
- CDR remained high in WB and GS reaching 3.7 deaths per thousand, compared with 3.9 in the WB and 3.7 in GS, while it stood at about 3.2 in the 1948 occupied territories. This reflects the cumulative impact of adverse political, economic and health conditions, particularly in the WB and GS.
- The total fertility rate remains relatively high in the WB and GS, reaching 3.8 births per woman in the WB and 3.9 in GS during 2017–2019, compared with 2.75 in the 1948 occupied territories, 2.6 in Jordan, 2.5 in Syria, and 2.7 in

Lebanon. Thus, it highlights clear disparities in reproductive behaviour between Palestinians within historic Palestine and those abroad.

- Average household size was highest in GS at 5.3 persons per house in 2023, followed by Jordan (5.1), then the WB and GS combined (4.9), and the WB (4.7). By contrast, it declined to 4.17 in the 1948 occupied territories, 4.1 in Syria (2010), and 4 in Lebanon, thereby reflecting the effects of socio-economic change and urbanization on family patterns.

Table 4/2: Selected Demographic Indicators of Palestinians by Residence[32]

Indicator	WB 2025	GS 2025	WB & GS 2025	Israel 2023	Jordan	Syria 2009–2010	Lebanon 2017
% of individuals under 15 years	34.6	39.1	36.3	30.8 males 29.7 females	39.9 (2011)	33.1	29
% of individuals 65 years and over	4.2	3	3.7	5.1 males 6.3 females	4.3 (2011)	4.4	6.4
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	103.5	101.1	102.6	103.1	–	100.4	102
CBR (births per 1,000 population)	25.9	31.1	28	21.6	29.2 (2010)	29.2	25.8
CDR (deaths per 1,000 population)	3.9	3.7 (2023)	3.7 (2023)	3.2	–	2.8 (2006)	–
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	3.8 (2017–2019)	3.9 (2017–2019)	3.8 (2017–2019)	2.75	2.3 (2024)	2.5	2.7
Average household size (individuals per house)	4.7 (2024)	5.3 (2023)	4.9 (2023)	4.17	5.1 (2011)	4.1	4

(–): No value.

3. Palestinian Refugees

Despite the difficulty of determining the exact number of Palestinians worldwide, available official data allows for about reasonable estimates. Based on PCBS estimates up to the end of 2025, the total Palestinian population reached about 15.49 million by December 2025. Of these, about 5.56 million reside in the WB and GS, and about 1.86 million in the 1948 occupied territories, while the remainder are in the diaspora. Moreover, the diaspora totals about 8.08 million,

including about 6.82 million in Arab states, with the rest distributed across other countries.[33] Overall, this distribution underscores the scale of Palestinian dispersion as a result of prolonged historical and political coercive processes.

Based on population estimates derived from the refugee share in the WB and GS (42.2% according to the 2017 Population Census), the number of refugees in both areas is estimated at about 2.345 million by the end of 2025. This includes about 913 thousand in the WB, or 26.3% of the total population, and about 1.432 million in GS, or 66.1%.[34] While these figures remain indicative due to differences in sources and reference years, they nonetheless constitute the most reliable estimate based on available data.

In this context, the estimates are broadly consistent with UNRWA data, which indicate about 918 thousand PRs in the WB and about 1.556 million in GS by the end of 2024 (see table 5/2). The discrepancies are mainly attributable to the emigration of some refugees from the WB and GS, alongside the presence of Palestinians abroad originating from these areas who hold "citizenship" status and retain the right of return and residence.

Furthermore, an estimated 150 thousand Palestinians from the 1948 occupied territories, who were displaced from their historical cities and villages, yet remained within the geographical borders of occupied Palestine in 1948. Thus, the total tally of Palestinian refugees by the end of 2025, is projected at 10.572 million, constituting 68% of the global Palestinians population.

It's worth noting that UNRWA's data is limited to the PRs within its five areas of operation: WB, GS, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Therefore, these statistics do not comprehensively capture the global refugee population, as they exclude many refugees residing outside UNRWA's operation areas, and even those within its operational areas who have not enlisted with the agency to benefit from its services. Furthermore, UNRWA's figures exclude the Palestinian refugees who took refuge post the 1967 war. Besides, there are refugees who had to flee Palestine under different circumstances (other than war) and were prevented from returning.

Therefore, UNRWA statistics of PRs, except to a limited extent in Syria and Lebanon, are incomplete and should not be considered definitive figures reflecting the reality of the 1948 refugee population. These figures only represent registrants with UNRWA eligible for its assistance and services, rather than all Palestinian refugees.

The total number of Registered Persons (RPs), including Other RPs, in the five UNRWA fields of operation was about 6.729 million by the end of 2024. This population is distributed as follows: 2.574 million in Jordan (38.2%), 2.913 million in the WB and GS (43.3%), including about 1.764 million in GS (26.2%) and 1.149 million in the WB (17.1%). The remaining about 1.242 million (18.5%) reside in Syria and Lebanon. Moreover, registered families across the five fields of operation numbered about 1.3 million, with an average household size of 5.3 persons, reflecting the overall demographic structure of PRs under UNRWA, as well as its capacity to plan educational, health and social services on the basis of these data.[35]

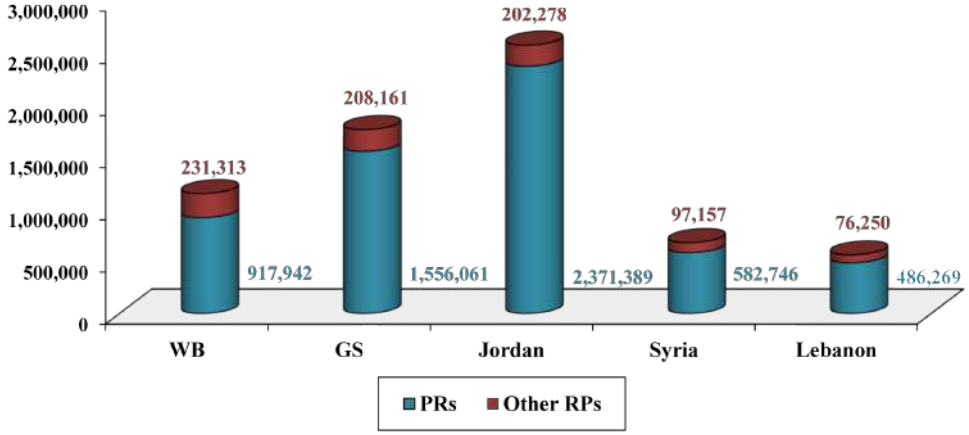
Palestinian refugee figures remain largely approximate, particularly for those residing outside UNRWA fields of operation. In these areas, official statistics are lacking, as are reliable data on population growth rates, which complicates the issue of double counting. This is further compounded by the fact that refugees may relocate for work or residence while remaining registered in their place of origin. This applies especially to Palestinians in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, as well as Palestinians in historic Palestine residing abroad.

Table 5/2: UNRWA-RPs According to Their Area of Operation By the End of 2024[36]

Indicator	WB	GS	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon	Total
PRs	917,942	1,556,061	2,371,389	582,746	486,269	**5,914,407**
Other RPs*	231,313	208,161	202,278	97,157	76,250	**815,159**
Total RPs	1,149,255	1,764,222	2,573,667	679,903	562,519	**6,729,566**
Official RCs	19	8	10	9	12	**58**
Schools	96	–	161	104	61	**422**
Pupil enrolment	47,157	–	104,336	50,541	37,972	**240,006**
Primary health-care facilities	43	7	25	24	27	**126**

* Other RPs: include non-refugee wives, non-refugee husbands, non-refugee children, Jerusalem poor, Gaza poor, etc.

UNRWA-RPs by the End of 2024



UNRWA-RPs by Area by the End of 2024

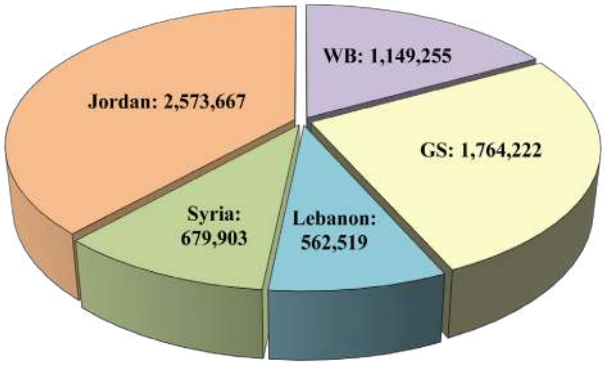


Table 6/2 indicates that UNRWA refugee communities, much like the general Palestinian population, are young, with 28% of Agency-PRs are children under the age of 18, with highest proportion in the GS (38.6%) and lowest in Lebanon (21.4%).

The data reveals that fertility rates among refugees in the WB and GS are the highest across UNRWA's five operation areas (3.6 births per woman), as reflected in the average family size in these areas (5.6 individuals per household).

The dependency ratio (the number of dependents per 100 individuals of working age, 15–64 years) among registered refugees is notably high in the GS primarily attributable to the significant percentage of individuals under 15 years old. This

situation could pose challenges given the high levels of unemployment and worsening economic conditions.

Table 6/2: Selected Demographic Indicators of UNRWA-PRs According to Their Area of Operation 2024[37]

Indicator	GS	WB	Jordan	Syria	Lebanon
Children below 18 years (%)	38.6	26	23.1	24.9	21.4
Average household size (individual per house)	5.6	5.6	5.2	4.8	4.7
Fertility rate (births per woman)	3.6	3.6	3.2	2.7	2.7
Dependency ratio	62.7	45.9	38.5	41.9	45.6

Regarding education, the 2022 figures indicate that refugees generally surpass non-refugees across education levels in both the WB and GS. Specifically, the illiteracy rate among refugees (15 years and above) stands at about 1.9%, compared with 2.3% among non-refugees. At the regional level, in the WB, the illiteracy rate among refugees (15 years and above) is about 2.1%, compared with 2.4% among non-refugees; similarly, in GS, it is about 1.7%, compared with 2% among non-refugees. Moreover, the proportion of individuals holding a bachelor's degree (aged 18 and above) is higher among refugees overall, reaching about 21%, compared with 19.1% among non-refugees. In the WB, the rate stands at about 19.2% among refugees, compared with 19.5% among non-refugees; by contrast, in GS, it rises to about 22%, compared with 17.7% among non-refugees.[38]

4. Demographic Growth Trends

Despite a relative decline in the rate of natural population growth among Palestinians, it remains comparatively high relative to other populations, including Israelis. However, in the wake of Operation al-Aqsa Flood and its repercussions, particularly Palestinian fatalities and reverse Israeli migration, the trajectory of demographic change diverged during 2024–2025. Notably, a significant wave of Jewish out-migration was reported, with some Israeli indicators suggesting figures of no less than about 500 thousand during the first six months of the war; by contrast, the Israeli CBS reported markedly lower estimates (about 150 thousand over two years). This disparity reflects a recurring Israeli tendency to present conservative

figures in an effort to preserve social cohesion and continuity; accordingly, Israeli demographic data should be approached with caution.

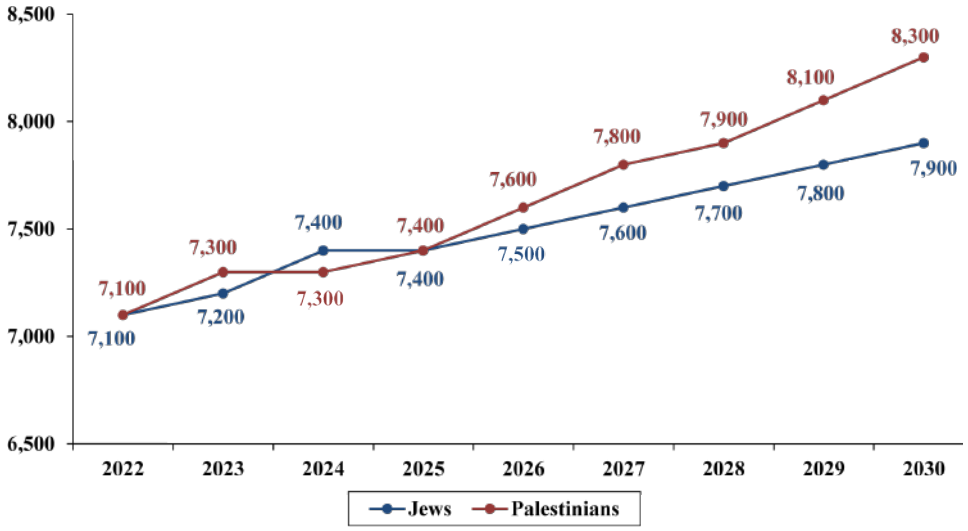
Estimates by the PCBS indicate that the number of Palestinians in historic Palestine reached about 7.4 million by the end of 2025. This figure is broadly equivalent to about 7.4 million Jews, according to the Israeli CBS for the same year, thereby reflecting a relative demographic balance. Notably, Palestinians had already surpassed Jews for the first time in many years in 2023, by about 100 thousand; moreover, projections suggest that this gap may widen to about 400 thousand in favor of Palestinians by 2030.

Furthermore, sustained Israeli efforts to displace Palestinians and to foster coercive environments for Palestinians inside Israel should be underscored, as part of broader strategies aimed at countering Palestinian demographic growth, facilitating the annexation of the WB, and securing a Jewish majority.

Table 7/2: Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2022–2030 (thousands)[39]

Year	Palestinians in historic Palestine	Jews
2022	7,100	7,100
2023	7,300	7,200
2024	7,300	7,400
2025	7,400	7,400
2026	7,600	7,500
2027	7,800	7,600
2028	7,900	7,700
2029	8,100	7,800
2030	8,300	7,900

Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2022–2030 (thousands)



Within a positive analytical framing, these projections underscore a structural reality: despite decades of oppression, displacement and Israeli occupation, the Palestinian people remain firmly rooted in their land and capable of reproducing their demographic and social presence. Consequently, this points to a strategic impasse confronting Israel. Indeed, about 125 years after the establishment of the World Zionist Organization and nearly 74 years after the founding of Israel, the Zionist project faces a demographic equation that contradicts its founding assumptions, namely, the numerical predominance of Palestinians in historic Palestine over Jewish settlers brought from more than one hundred countries across successive phases. This dynamic constitutes a significant source of structural concern for decision-makers in Israel, given its long-term political, security and strategic implications.

Nevertheless, characterizing this reality as a Palestinian "demographic time bomb" should not be construed as evidence of an imminent resolution of the conflict, nor should it invite overly optimistic conclusions that overlook the nature of settler colonialism as a project capable of reshaping realities through force. Rather, comparative colonial experiences suggest that, although demographically significant, the numerical superiority of an indigenous population does not, in itself, translate into political or emancipatory advantage unless coupled with

effective organization, power resources, and the capacity to impose deterrence or sustained costs on the colonial project.

In this context, Israel's cumulative policies over past decades may be understood as a systematic strategic response to this demographic challenge. In this regard, the 2005 withdrawal from GS served as a practical model aimed at offloading the Palestinian demographic burden while retaining effective control over the Strip's vital space. In the WB, by contrast, policy has increasingly centred on maximising land control with minimal Palestinian population presence. This has been pursued through settlement expansion, the fragmentation of Palestinian geography, and the imposition of an integrated framework of economic, security and legal restrictions designed to engineer a coercive living environment, thereby encouraging forced or quasi-voluntary migration.

The recent Israeli war on GS, particularly in the aftermath of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, unfolded within an escalatory context that extends beyond declared military objectives. More specifically, it has revealed an explicit attempt to reintroduce forced displacement as a possible response to the perceived demographic impasse. In this regard, the war has assumed an extensive destructive character targeting residential, economic and service infrastructure, thereby generating large-scale internal displacement and catastrophic humanitarian conditions, which may be read as a prelude to depopulation or outward migration pressures. Although this attempt has so far failed due to Palestinian resilience and the absence of explicit international political endorsement, the continued circulation of such an option underscores the depth of the structural crisis of the Zionist project.[40]

Accordingly, while Palestinian demographic resilience remains central, it does not, in itself, constitute sufficient protection against the settler-colonial project unless embedded within a comprehensive national strategy. Such a strategy would need to translate demographic weight into a coherent political framework capable of confronting policies of slow extermination, forced displacement, and the reengineering of Palestinian geography and demography. In this context, the war on GS signals a shift toward a more dangerous phase, in which colonial practices move beyond control and toward attempts at physical and demographic erasure. Consequently, this reality necessitates a renewed Palestinian and international approach that treats the demographic dimension as a central arena of struggle, no less significant than the military and political domains.

5. Palestinians Abroad and the Right of Return

Palestinian refugees abroad play a central role in sustaining awareness of the Palestine issue and reinforcing national identity among younger generations, primarily through affirming the right of return and attachment to the land of Palestine. This role extends beyond symbolism to political and organisational action, as Palestinian communities, despite political constraints and limited institutional support, continue to launch educational and advocacy initiatives and expand international backing for the cause. Moreover, they operate through community networks to document violations, construct alternative narratives, and organise digital, cultural and legal campaigns that keep the right of return present in international discourse.

In this context, the PCPA, established in Istanbul on 25/2/2017, has continued to play a significant role in highlighting the Palestine issue, particularly the refugee question and the right of return, through its activities during 2024 and 2025, especially the second and third Palestinian National Dialogue Forums. Notably, the final statement of the second forum, held in Istanbul on 28–29/6/2024 with the participation of about 200 Palestinian figures from Palestine, Jordan, Türkiye, the Gulf states, Europe, the US and Latin America, reaffirmed support for resistance in the WB and GS. It further called for strengthening Palestinian steadfastness and coordinating national efforts, while advocating the establishment of a national alliance in support of resistance and a global coalition against Israeli occupation, with the aim of mobilising international solidarity and reinforcing national unity.[41]

PCPA launched an online campaign titled "Brotherhood Day" in March–April 2024, aimed at raising funds to support the population of GS.[42] It also convened a major conference for Palestinians abroad in Istanbul on 11–12/4/2025 under the slogan "The Palestinian people reject displacement projects; there is no alternative to the right of return," as part of efforts to unify Palestinian positions in confronting displacement schemes and to move beyond structural fragmentation in national action. The conference called for resisting forced displacement policies and urged Palestinians abroad either to exercise the right of return or to actively contribute to defending national identity.[43]

Among the key national initiatives reflecting the engagement of a broad and significant segment of Palestinians abroad in national work was the convening of

the National Conference for Palestine in Doha, Qatar, from 17–19/2/2025. The conference emphasized the necessity of forming a unified Palestinian national leadership, rebuilding the PLO and confronting genocide as well as annexation and settlement schemes, in addition to countering the Trump–Netanyahu project premised on displacement and ethnic cleansing.[44]

Furthermore, the Third Palestinian National Dialogue Forum, held in Istanbul on 14–15/11/2025 under the slogan "Unity of the Palestinian Position in the Face of Genocide, Displacement and Annexation," marked a further stage in national mobilization, reflecting the growing role of the PCPA. The forum endorsed the establishment of the National Authority for Palestinian Popular Action, as an umbrella coordinating framework for popular conferences, initiatives and independent national figures inside and outside Palestine, with the aim of organizing efforts and mobilizing resources in support of resistance and Palestinian steadfastness. According to its final statement, the body is mandated to support the Palestinian struggle in all its forms, confront annexation, settlement and displacement plans, and address the consequences of the aggression. Moreover, it seeks to develop a project for Palestinian representation, including the election of representatives in available arenas, in addition to building Arab and Islamic alliances, formulating a national vision for the next phase, and exploring the establishment of a "Palestinian virtual world" to produce a unified digital Palestinian identity.[45]

Moreover, the Palestinian communities abroad played an important role in foregrounding the Palestine issue and in enhancing the engagement of local constituencies in supporting it, as well as in condemning the war on GS and Israeli occupation policies and practices. This was achieved through the organisation of thousands of demonstrations worldwide, particularly in Europe, North America and Australia, alongside fundraising and related initiatives. In addition, Palestinians abroad contributed to shaping global public opinion via social media by disseminating solidarity messages and awareness campaigns on violations during the war on GS. Consequently, this strengthened the visibility of the Palestine issue in international discourse and helped construct a collective narrative that has limited attempts to obscure the scale of destruction and genocide in GS.[46]

The General Union of Palestinian Communities in Europe (GUPCE) called on EU member states and the international community to impose sanctions on Israel, following the precedents set by Canada, the UK, France and Belgium.[47]

It also firmly rejected Trump's plan to displace Palestinians from GS.[48] In the same vein, Palestinian communities in Italy reaffirmed the right of return for millions of Palestinian refugees and displaced persons.[49] In the UK, the Association of the Palestinian Community in the UK (APCUK) organized a parliamentary session at the UK House of Commons entitled "Amplifying the Voice of Palestinian Women Under Occupation," aimed at highlighting the suffering of the Palestinian people, particularly women facing compounded vulnerabilities under occupation.[50]

Moreover, in a significant step toward preserving Palestinian collective memory, the Qatar Press Center (QPC), in cooperation with the Encyclopedia of Palestinian Camps, launched on 18/2/2025 the project's official website, a key digital platform for documenting the history of Palestinian camps and safeguarding the heritage of refugees.[51]

In March 2024, Palestinian figures, civil society organizations, and activists launched a popular campaign calling for the unification of Palestinian leadership, bringing together hundreds of participants from diverse political, professional, academic and union backgrounds.[52]

In this context, the Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) convened a conference in London in February 2025 entitled "Naming Genocide: The Global Responsibility For Gaza," calling for Israel to be held accountable for its actions in GS and emphasizing that "justice for Palestine is both a legal and moral imperative."[53] Furthermore, Association 302 to Defend Refugees Rights highlighted the plight of Palestinian refugees by opposing UNRWA service reductions and administrative measures against its staff, while condemning Israel's systematic destruction of the agency's facilities and schools in GS, as well as its measures against UNRWA in occupied Jerusalem.[54]

Accordingly, Palestinians abroad constitute a central pillar of the Palestinian national project, as custodians of collective memory and the right of return, and as influential actors. Notably, their mobilization during the genocide war on GS underscored the diaspora's centrality as a sphere of narrative contestation and political pressure. Nevertheless, the consolidation of this role remains contingent upon their integration into national decision-making structures and the development of effective organizational frameworks that safeguard the right of return and counter displacement schemes.

Second: Economic Indicators in WB and GS

Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the subsequent Israeli war on GS have had profound and far-reaching repercussions for the Palestinian economy overall, and for the economy of GS in particular, within a context defined by the continuation of Palestinian hardship resulting from restrictive Israeli policies and measures. Such policies have depleted economic resources and impeded growth and development, notably through constraints on the movement of people and goods and control over sources of income and production. Consequently, the Palestinian economy has been rendered structurally dependent on the Israeli economy, thereby undermining its capacity for independent and sustainable development.

Furthermore, as Israeli military operations against GS, by land, sea and air, have continued since 7/10/2023, with no substantive interruption until October 2025, the Strip has undergone one of the longest and most intense military campaigns in its contemporary history. This has resulted in about a quarter of a million Palestinians killed or injured, alongside extensive destruction across GS, underscoring the systematic and large-scale nature of the aggression.

According to estimates by the GS Government Media Office, the economy in GS sustained losses of about $70 billion during 2024 and 2025, owing to widespread destruction of infrastructure and vital sectors, including housing, energy, water, health, education and transport, about 90% of which were damaged over two years of war.[55] Furthermore, the destruction generated about 60 million tons of debris, equivalent to the load of 3 thousand container ships, leaving roughly 30 tons of rubble per capita; it is also estimated that removal will take about 7 years.[56] Consequently, this extensive devastation resulted in a near-total paralysis of commercial and industrial activity, a contraction in domestic productivity, declining public revenues, and a worsening crisis in basic services, thereby deepening economic fragility and constraining prospects for recovery and reconstruction.

The losses extended directly to housing and essential infrastructure. About 300 thousand housing units were completely destroyed, while about 200 thousand sustained severe or partial damage, rendering them uninhabitable and resulting in the forced displacement of about two million people. Moreover, more than

288 thousand families were left without shelter and forced into deteriorated tents unfit for living under extremely harsh conditions; notably, more than 125 thousand of the 135 thousand tents had already deteriorated. Furthermore, the destruction encompassed religious and social life, with more than 835 mosques completely destroyed and over 180 partially damaged. Basic infrastructure was likewise severely affected: about 5,080 km of electricity networks and 2,285 distribution transformers were destroyed, in addition to more than 700 thousand linear meters of water networks, over 700 thousand linear meters of sewage networks, and more than 3 million linear meters of roads and streets. In parallel, more than 94% of agricultural land was devastated, alongside the complete destruction of maritime fishing zones.[57] Concurrently, GS experienced a severe food crisis during 2024 and 2025, reaching levels that can be described as famine in large parts of the territory.[58] (see Chapter Four of this report for details).

It is important to underscore the limitations of a purely statistical presentation. Lives lost, injuries, displacement, the destruction of homes, and the loss of property, income and livelihoods cannot be reduced to numerical indicators, as each case entails profound human suffering and often unquantifiable experiences of loss and resilience. Accordingly, statistics cannot fully capture the scale of the catastrophic conditions, particularly in GS. Nevertheless, the figures presented here are intended to reflect available indicators of one dimension of the Palestinian experience under occupation. This reality is further compounded by the continued strangulation of the Palestinian economy by land, sea and air, the ongoing extraction and confiscation of Palestinian resources, strict control over PA imports and exports, and the systematic obstruction of meaningful development on the ground.

1. GDP in PA Territories

GDP reflects the overall economic activity carried out by all institutions producing goods and services in the public, private and other sectors in a country over one year. It is a widely used indicator employed locally, regionally and internationally at different levels. It indicates the state of economic development and growth, and the PCBS periodically measures and presents its current data and future forecasts.

a. GDP Growth Rate

The Palestinian economy witnessed, during 2024–2025, an unprecedented and severe contraction amid the Israeli war on GS and its spillover effects into the WB. This resulted in a broad structural deterioration of macroeconomic indicators, particularly GDP growth. Preliminary estimates issued by the PCBS indicate a sharp negative performance, with GDP declining by about 24% in Q3 2025 compared with Q3 2023 (pre-assault period). Although a modest increase of about 3% was recorded in Q4 2025 compared with the same period in 2024,[59] this does not reflect genuine economic recovery. Rather, it signals a fragile stabilisation at very low levels and is largely driven by a base effect following the deep contraction in the preceding year.

A comparison between 2024 and 2025 indicates that GDP recorded a modest increase of 4.3% in 2025 relative to 2024, reaching about $12,463 million compared with $11,944 million (see table 8/2). This rise is primarily attributable to a relative improvement in economic performance in the WB, which experienced limited growth of GDP during 2025, thereby contributing to an overall increase in output, as measured by the total value of goods and services produced. More specifically, this improvement reflects the partial resumption of commercial and economic activity in certain productive sectors following a relative slowdown in 2024, which, in turn, supported higher domestic output.[60] However, this increase does not signify a recovery in productive capacity; rather, the recovery trajectory remains fragile and gradual, underscoring that the Palestinian economy has yet to regain its productive vitality and continues to face deep structural imbalances and the effects of imposed constraints.

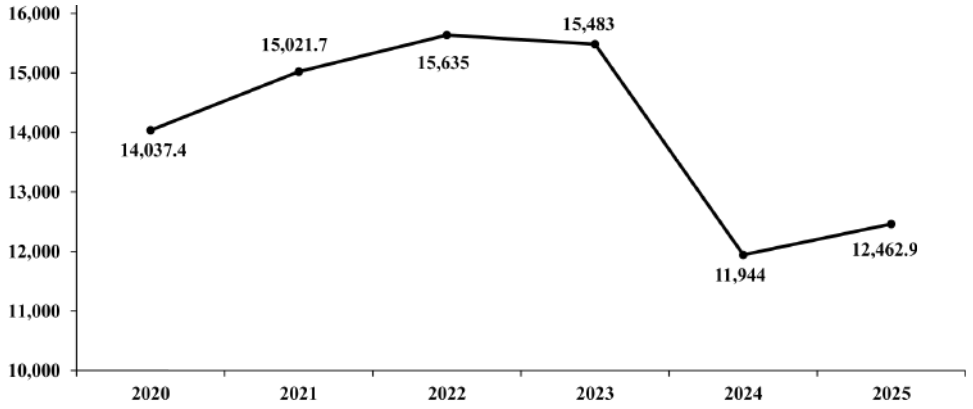
Table 8/2: GDP in PA Territories 2020–2025 at Constant Prices ($ million)[61]

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025*
GDP	14,037.4	15,021.7	15,635	15,483	11,944	12,462.9
Average annual growth (%)	–11.3	+7	+4.1	–1	–22.9	+4.3

Note: The data based on PCBS statistics excludes the parts of Jerusalem annexed by Israel in 1967. The base year is 2015. This exclusion will be applied to all the following tables in this chapter.

* Perliminary estimates.

GDP in PA Territories 2020–2025 at Constant Prices ($ million)



According to a report issued in November 2025 by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the economies of the WB and GS are undergoing the deepest contraction in their recorded history, driven by prolonged military operations, structural constraints, and restrictions on the movement of trade and resources. Consequently, GDP has declined sharply, reverting to levels observed decades ago and reflecting a significant economic contraction.[62]

Another UNCTAD report stated that by 2024, the GDP of WB and GS had fallen to 70% of the 2022 level, with output shrinking by 27% compared with 2023. Furthermore, by the end of 2024, the economy had regressed to 2010 levels, with GDP per capita at 2003 levels, "thereby erasing 22 years of economic progress in only 15 months."[63]

A more in-depth analytical reading of GDP developments in Palestine over 2020–2025 reveals sharp structural shifts reflecting the severity of the economic shock to the productive base of the WB and GS. Following a phase of relative recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, peaking in 2022 at $15.6 billion, the Palestinian economy entered a phase of forced contraction that significantly eroded its capacity to generate added value. Estimates for 2025 indicate a decline to about $12.5 billion, marking a substantial loss that has pushed macroeconomic indicators below levels recorded five years earlier and weakened the foundations of growth and stability.

Furthermore, these trends underscore a widening structural divergence between the WB and GS, as the conventional disparity has evolved into a deep structural gap. While the WB has maintained limited resilience, GS has undergone a near-total collapse of its capital and productive base, with direct implications for the structure and geographical distribution of GDP.

An analysis of GDP shares further underscores this imbalance. During 2020–2022, a degree of relative stability prevailed, with the WB contributing about 82.6% of GDP, compared with about 17.4% for GS. However, the Israeli war on GS following 7/10/2023 fundamentally reconfigured this distribution. The GS GDP declined sharply from about $2,713 million in 2022 to about $486 million in 2025. Consequently, its share of GDP contracted from 17.4% to only 3.9% over the same period, marking the lowest level ever recorded for its economic contribution (see table 9/2).

This pronounced decline indicates a shift from GS contributing about one-sixth of GDP to a nearly incapacitated economic margin, amid a widespread collapse of industrial, agricultural and service activities. In effect, it has been reduced to a production-devastated area as a result of the systematic destruction of capital assets and infrastructure.

In contrast, the collapse of GS's economy resulted in the WB accounting for about 96.1% of the combined GDP of the WB and GS in 2025, thereby entrenching a condition of "forced centralization" of economic activity within a single geographic space. Although the WB registered a decline in absolute terms in 2024 relative to peak years, the relative gap with GS widened significantly, rising from about 65 percentage points in 2020 to about 92 percentage points by the end of 2025.

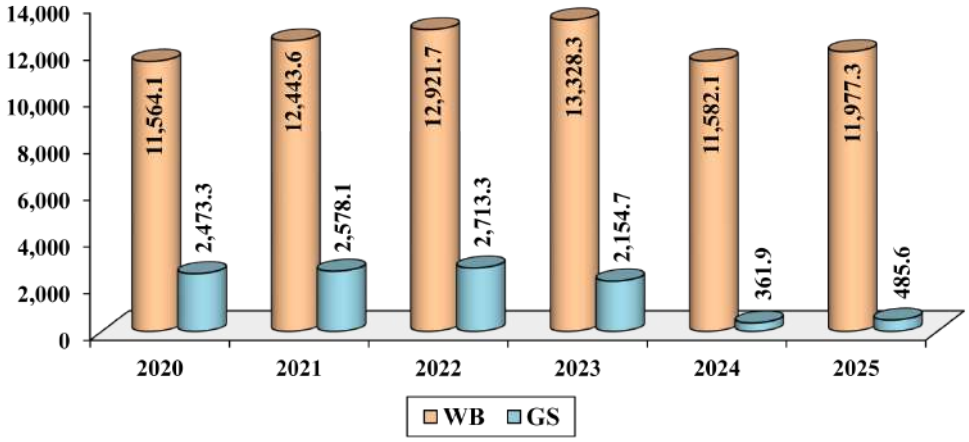
This pronounced divergence indicates that the Palestinian economy now operates along two contradictory trajectories: on the one hand, a path that seeks to sustain a minimum level of productivity and continuity in the WB despite compounded pressures; and, on the other, a catastrophic contraction in GS, effectively excluding it from the national accounts as a meaningful economic contributor. Accordingly, any future prospects for restoring economic growth remain contingent upon halting the collapse in GS and initiating a comprehensive reconstruction process capable of reintegrating its lost productive capacity into the core of the Palestinian macroeconomy.

Table 9/2: GDP in WB and GS 2020–2025 at Constant Prices ($ million)[64]

Year	WB		GS		WB and GS	
	GDP	Percentage (%)	GDP	Percentage (%)	GDP	Percentage (%)
2020	11,564.1	82.4	2,473.3	17.6	**14,037.4**	**100**
2021	12,443.6	82.8	2,578.1	17.2	**15,021.7**	**100**
2022	12,921.7	82.6	2,713.3	17.4	**15,635**	**100**
2023	13,328.3	86.1	2,154.7	13.9	**15,483**	**100**
2024	11,582.1	97	361.9	3	**11,944**	**100**
2025*	11,977.3	96.1	485.6	3.9	**12,462.9**	**100**

* Preliminary estimates.

GDP in WB and GS 2020–2025 at Constant Prices ($ million)



b. GDP Growth in WB and GS

A review of the data in table 10/2 indicates that the Palestinian economy in both the WB and GS during 2020–2022 followed a trajectory that may be described as a "fragile recovery" in the aftermath of the contractionary shock induced by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In this regard, economic performance reflected uneven capacities between the WB and GS to restore activity. The WB

exhibited relative resilience, achieving a growth rate of 7.6% in 2021, driven by the reactivation of the services and trade sectors and an improvement in domestic demand. By contrast, growth in GS remained slow and volatile due to persistent structural constraints and the blockade, despite recording a modest increase of 5.2% in 2022, which constituted only a temporary indication of relative stabilization that soon dissipated amid subsequent shocks.

However, in 2023 and 2024, the Palestinian economy, particularly in GS, shifted from deceleration to deep forced contraction. Growth in GS declined sharply by 20.6% in 2023, followed by a near-total economic collapse in 2024, with a historic contraction rate of 83.2%. This deterioration cannot be adequately explained within conventional recessionary frameworks; rather, it reflects a process of productive base disintegration. This is evidenced by the steep decline in GDP, from about $2.7 billion at its peak in 2022 to about $361.9 million in 2024, driven by systematic Israeli destruction of capital assets and infrastructure, the disruption of market systems, and the erosion of the economy's capacity to generate value added.

Preliminary estimates for 2025 point to a widening structural divergence in growth between the WB and GS. The WB recorded modest positive growth of about 3.4%; however, this largely reflects a low base effect rather than a genuine economic recovery. In contrast, the limited improvement observed in GS in 2025 relative to 2024 remains marginal within the deep collapse caused by the aggression, with the level of contraction still at about 82.1% compared with 2022.

This divergence, in turn, underscores the profound and long-term economic damage inflicted on GS, which has significantly eroded its relative weight within the overall Palestinian economy. Accordingly, its GDP accounted for only about 3.9% of total Palestinian GDP in 2025, down from about 17.4% in 2022.

Table 10/2: GDP Growth in the WB and GS 2020–2025 at Constant Prices ($ million)[65]

		Actual					Preliminary estimates
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
WB	GDP	11,564.1	12,443.6	12,921.7	13,328.3	11,582.1	11,977.3
	Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	–11	+7.6	+3.8	+3.1	–13.1	+3.4
GS	GDP	2,473.3	2,578.1	2,713.3	2,154.7	361.9	485.6
	Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	–12.6	+4.2	+5.2	–20.6	–83.2	+34.2

In this context, the sharp decline in the GDP to about $486 million in 2025 reflects a structural shift from a productive economy to an aid-dependent, quasi-relief economy. Strategically, this shift points to the entrenchment of long-term extreme poverty and the accelerated erosion of human capital, particularly amid the simultaneous collapse of economic activity and the extensive destruction of educational and health institutions. Consequently, any future recovery appears contingent on rebuilding core economic instruments rather than merely addressing short-term financing gaps.

c. GDP in PA Territories and Israel

Available data on GDP at current prices during 2020–2025 indicate a rapidly widening structural gap between the economy of the PA and that of Israel, reflecting a deep-seated divergence in growth trajectories. Israel's GDP rose from about $411.6 billion in 2020 to about $611.5 billion in 2025, maintaining a clear upward trend, especially in 2024 and 2025.

In contrast, the PA's GDP has exhibited both volatility and structural fragility. It rose from $15.5 billion in 2020 to a peak of $19.2 billion in 2022, before declining to $18.6 billion in 2023. This was followed by a pronounced contraction in 2024, when it fell to $16 billion, and a partial, limited recovery in 2025 to $17.2 billion, still below pre-shock levels.

Similarly, the ratio of Palestinian GDP to Israeli GDP reveals a persistent and widening relative gap. It declined from 3.8% in 2020 to 3.6% in 2022, then dropped more markedly to 3% in 2024, and further to 2.8% in 2025. This sustained

downward trajectory reflects a deepening structural imbalance in favour of the Israeli economy, rather than mere cyclical variation.

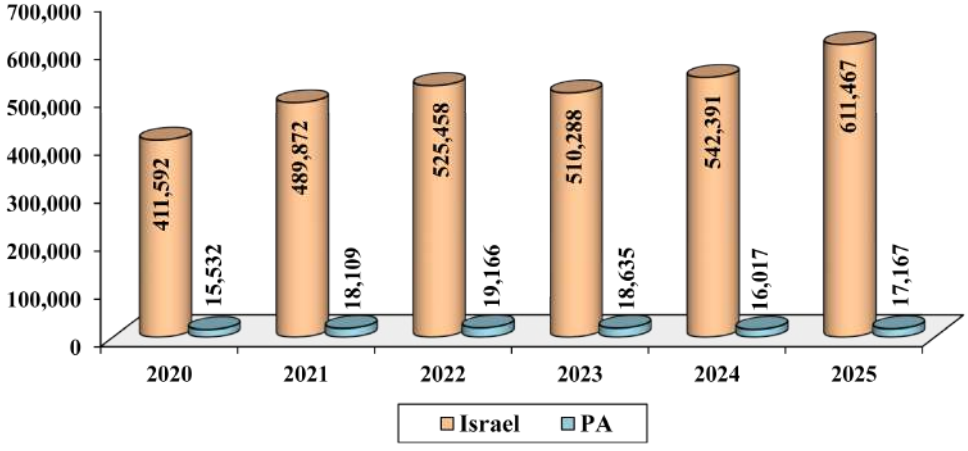
Overall, these indicators suggest that the widening GDP gap cannot be attributed solely to differences in scale or efficiency. Rather, it reflects the cumulative effects of Israel's policies, including control over resources, restrictions on investment and trade, and the weakening of Palestinian productive capacity. Consequently, the Palestinian economy's relative position within the regional economic structure has progressively eroded, particularly in the wake of successive shocks in 2024 and 2025.

Table 11/2: GDP in PA Territories and Israel 2020–2025 at Current Prices ($ million)[66]

Year	PA	Israel	% Palestinian GDP to Israeli GDP
2020	15,532	411,592	3.8
2021	18,109	489,872	3.7
2022	19,166	525,458	3.6
2023	18,635	510,288	3.7
2024	16,017	542,391	3
2025	17,167*	611,467	2.8

* Preliminary estimates.

GDP in PA Territories and Israel 2020–2025 at Current Prices ($ million)



2. GDP per Capita

The GDP per capita is a composite indicator that captures the evolution and real growth of GDP over time. It is calculated in constant prices, thereby excluding the effects of both inflation and population growth. Accordingly, it represents the average share of GDP attributable to each resident, thereby allowing a more precise assessment of general living standards compared to nominal measures.

In analytical terms, GDP per capita is also used as an approximate proxy for average individual income and disposable income available for consumption, which in turn reflects actual purchasing power per person. This purchasing power is shaped by several factors, most notably the volume of external transfers and the scale of deductions imposed on individuals, including taxes and fees. Hence, GDP per capita serves as a key indicator for evaluating economic welfare and consumption capacity over time.

a. Average GDP per capita

Table 12/2 indicates that the average GDP per capita for the PA during 2024 and 2025 reflects a pronounced shift in the economic trajectory, thereby underscoring the depth of the structural shock affecting the Palestinian economy amid the ongoing large-scale offensive, particularly in GS, as well as its spillover effects on WB.

In this context, GDP per capita at constant prices declined from about $2,999.8 in 2023 to $2,274.4 in 2024, representing an unprecedented contraction of about 24.2%. This sharp decline signals a substantial deterioration in productive capacity and real incomes, alongside a broad erosion of living standards.

By contrast, in 2025, preliminary estimates suggest a marginal increase in GDP per capita to about $2,326.5, corresponding to a limited growth rate of 2.3%. Nevertheless, this uptick does not reflect genuine economic recovery; rather, it points to a fragile stabilization at historically low levels, driven by a constrained economic base and the continued restrictions on productive and commercial activity. Overall, the trajectory of GDP per capita over 2024–2025 confirms the Palestinian economy's transition into a phase of deep structural decline, characterized by weakening real incomes and rising poverty and economic

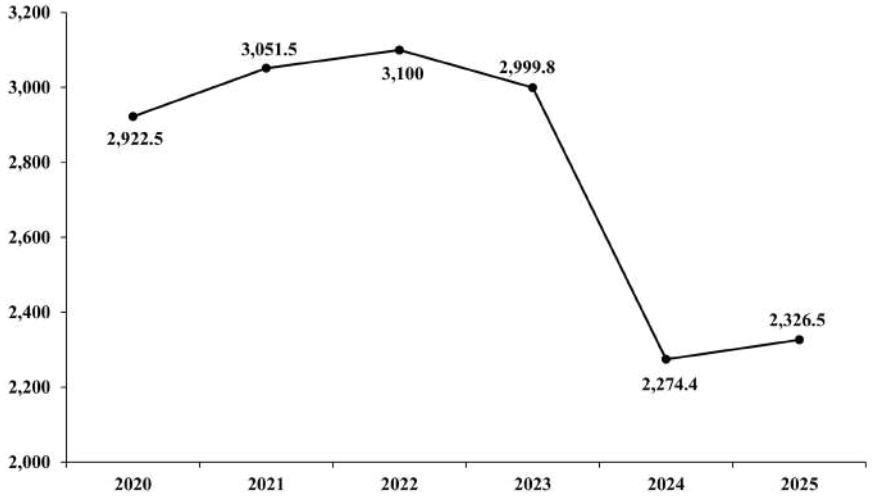
vulnerability. Consequently, this trend poses substantial strategic challenges for policymakers, particularly with regard to reconstruction and development efforts over the medium to long term.

Table 12/2: GDP per Capita in PA Territories 2020–2025 at Constant Prices ($)[67]

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025*
GDP per capita	2,922.5	3,051.5	3,100	2,999.8	2,274.4	2,326.5
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	–13.5	+4.4	+1.6	–3.2	–24.2	+2.3

* Preliminary estimates.

GDP per Capita in PA Territories 2020–2025 at Constant Prices ($)



b. Average GDP per capita in WB and GS

An analysis of GDP per capita reveals a marked structural divergence between the WB and GS over the period 2020–2025, with the gap peaking in 2024 and 2025. While the WB sustained relatively higher per capita income levels despite economic volatility, GS experienced an unprecedented collapse, reflecting the magnitude of the severe economic shock it endured during the genocide.

In WB, GDP per capita reached approximately $3,857 in 2024, registering a sharp decline of 14.9% compared to 2023. This contraction primarily reflects the indirect repercussions of the genocide in GS, particularly the tightening of restrictions on movement and trade, as well as declining employment opportunities and incomes.

By contrast, estimates for 2025 point to a modest recovery, with GDP per capita in the WB rising to about $3,905, corresponding to a growth rate of 1.2%. However, this improvement remains partial and has not restored the indicator to its pre-crisis levels, thereby underscoring the continued fragility of the WB's economic structure.

Conversely, developments in GS indicate a catastrophic collapse in GDP per capita, which declined from $970 in 2023 to about $161 in 2024, representing an 83.4% contraction. This sharp decline reflects the near-total destruction of the productive base, the paralysis of economic activity, and the collapse of individual income sources. Although a marginal increase was recorded in 2025, with GDP per capita reaching about $212, it remains exceptionally low relative to 2023 levels.

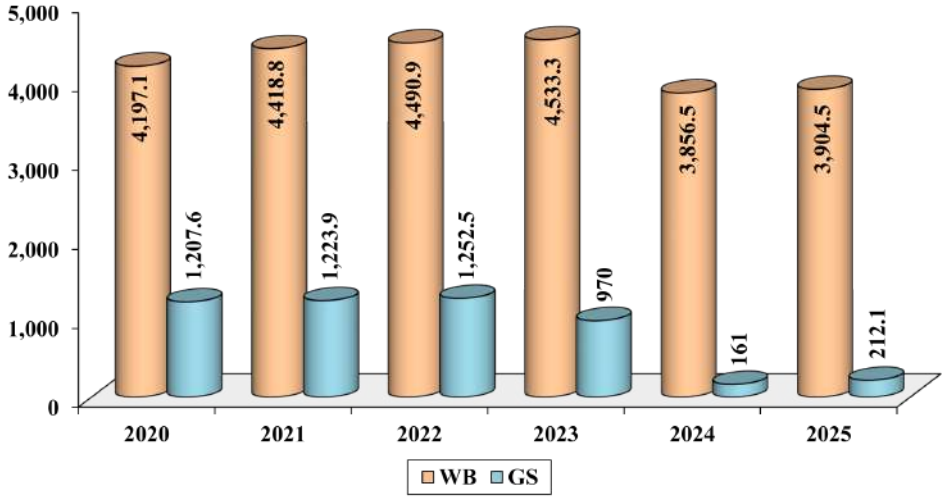
In comparative terms, the income gap between the two regions widened to an unprecedented extent in 2024 and 2025. GDP per capita in the WB was approximately 24 times that of GS in 2024, and about 18 times in 2025. This disparity underscores a deep structural imbalance in the distribution of output and income between the WB and GS, driven by Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the Israeli war, which was primarily concentrated in GS (see table 13/2).

Accordingly, trends in GDP per capita during 2024–2025 reflect a structural shift in the Palestinian economic trajectory, marked by a near-total collapse in living standards in GS, alongside a sharp contraction and fragile recovery in the WB. This shift carries significant strategic implications for spatial equity, social stability and medium-term economic prospects.

Table 13/2: Average GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 2020–2025 at Constant Prices ($)[68]

		Actual					Preliminary estimates
		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
WB	GDP	4,197.1	4,418.8	4,490.9	4,533.3	3,856.5	3,904.5
	Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	–13	–5.3	+1.6	–0.9	–14.9	+1.2
GS	GDP	1,207.6	1,223.9	1,252.5	970	161	212.1
	Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	–15.1	+1.3	+2.3	–22.6	–83.4	+31.7

Average GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 2020–2025 at Constant Prices ($)



c. Comparison of GDP per capita Between PA Territories and Israel

A comparison of GDP per capita between the PA territories and Israel reveals a deep and structural gap over the period 2020–2025, in current prices, reflecting a persistent asymmetry in productive capacity and income levels between the two sides.

Throughout this period, the GDP per capita of the PA territories peaked in 2020 at only 7.3% of the Israeli level. Thereafter, this share followed a gradual

downward trajectory, stabilizing at around 7% in both 2022 and 2023. The year 2024 marks a pronounced negative turning point, as GDP per capita in the PA territories declined to about $3,050, compared to $54,393 in Israel. Consequently, the ratio fell to 5.6%, meaning that Israeli per capita income was roughly 18 times higher. This represents the lowest level recorded over 2020–2025, in the context of the large-scale genocide in GS and its broader spillover effects on the Palestinian economy as a whole.

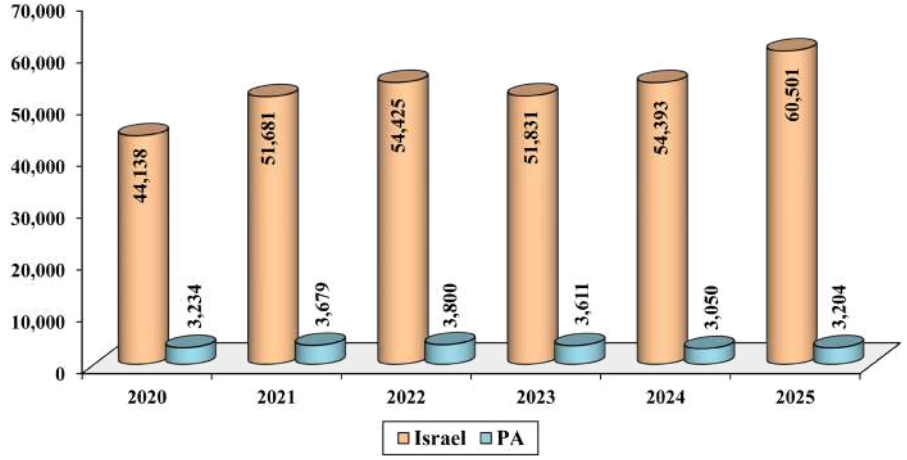
In 2025, a relative improvement is observed, with GDP per capita in the PA territories rising to about $3,204, while Israeli GDP per capita increased further to $60,501. However, this partial recovery does not indicate genuine convergence; rather, it reflects a fragile rebound from a very low base, while the structural and absolute gap remains firmly in favour of the Israeli economy. Accordingly, the comparison underscores that 2024 and 2025 clearly illustrate the impact of political and military shocks on Palestinian living standards, in contrast to the continued upward trajectory of Israeli per capita income, thereby further entrenching developmental disparities and reinforcing economic asymmetry between the two sides.

Table 14/2: GDP per Capita in the PA Territories and Israel 2020–2025 at Current Prices ($)[69]

Year	PA territories	Israel	% Palestinian GDP per capita of Israeli GDP per capita
2020	3,234	44,138	7.3
2021	3,679	51,681	7.1
2022	3,800	54,425	7
2023	3,611	51,831	7
2024	3,050	54,393	5.6
2025	3,204*	60,501	5.3

* Preliminary estimates

GDP per Capita in the PA Territories and Israel 2020–2025 at Current Prices ($)



3. Public Debt

Public debt, both domestic and foreign, has been closely linked to the expansion of government expenditure and, consequently, the persistence of budget deficits. A marked decline in volatile foreign aid has been observed since 2009, followed by increased fiscal pressures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as deductions imposed by Israel.

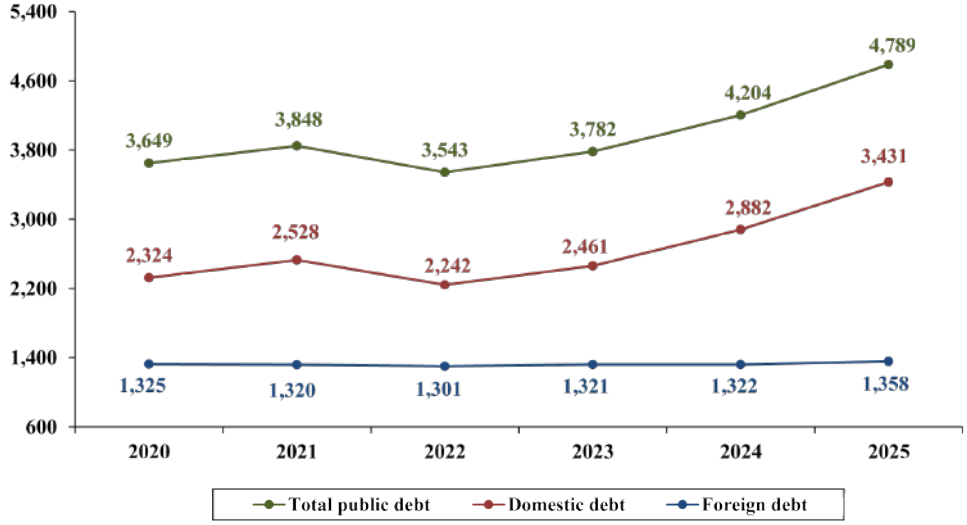
As a result, the PA has increasingly resorted to borrowing, particularly from domestic sources, including the banking sector and public institutions such as the Palestinian Pension Agency.

Table 15/2: PA Government Public Debt 2020–2025 ($ million)[70]

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Domestic debt	2,324	2,528	2,242	2,461	2,882	3,431
Annual growth rate (%)	+47.4	+8.8	–11.3	+9.8	+17.1	+19
Foreign debt	1,325	1,320	1,301	1,321	1,322	1,358
Annual growth rate (%)	+8.8	–1.4	–1.4	+1.6	+0.1	+2.7
Total public debt	**3,649**	**3,848**	**3,543**	**3,782**	**4,204**	**4,789**
GDP at current prices	15,532	18,109	19,166	18,635	16,017	17,167*
Total public debt as % of GDP	23.5	21.2	18.5	20.3	26.2	27.9

* Preliminary estimates

PA Government Public Debt 2020–2025 ($ million)



Data on the public debt of the PA over the period 2020–2025 indicate a clear structural shift in the trajectory of public indebtedness, moving from a relatively contained risk profile toward a phase of sustained debt accumulation, particularly evident in 2024 and 2025.

With regard to domestic debt, 2024 represents a marked inflection point, as the debt increased to approximately $2,882 million, recording an annual growth rate of 17.1% compared to more moderate fluctuations in preceding years.

This rise reflects the government's intensified reliance on domestic borrowing to offset the sharp contraction in public revenues, driven by declining economic activity, reduced external transfers, and increasing Israeli deductions. This upward trajectory further accelerated in 2025, when domestic debt reached about $3,431 million, reflecting a 19% increase. Consequently, this signals a deepening dependence on the banking sector and public institutions as primary financing channels, in the context of a progressively narrowing set of alternative funding sources.

In contrast, foreign debt displays a relatively stable trajectory, registering only modest increases over the period 2020–2025. In 2024, it rose marginally by 0.1% to $1,322 million, followed by a further increase of 2.7% in 2025, bringing it

to $1,358 million. This pattern reflects constrained access to foreign financing and the political and institutional conditionalities attached to it, as compared to the relative ease of mobilizing domestic resources, albeit at the cost of internal financial stability.

With regard to total public debt, a pronounced acceleration in accumulation is evident in 2024 and 2025. The total public debt increased from $3,782 million in 2023 to $4,204 million in 2024, and further to $4,789 million in 2025, representing a cumulative rise of nearly $1 billion within two years.

This trend assumes greater significance when viewed against the trajectory of GDP at current prices, which declined to $16,017 million in 2024 before recording a modest recovery to $17,167 million in 2025, an increase insufficient to contain the rapid expansion in indebtedness.

Accordingly, the ratio of total public debt to GDP rose from 20.3% in 2023 to 26.2% in 2024, and further to 27.9% in 2025, reflecting a shift in the PA economy toward a higher level of financial risk, as debt growth has clearly outpaced the economy's capacity to generate income. This dynamic suggests that the recent expansion in borrowing has assumed a structurally compelled character, driven by a deep economic shock, a weak productive base, and a shrinking fiscal space. Consequently, this raises fundamental questions regarding the sustainability of public finances and the government's ability to manage the debt burden without exacerbating economic and social imbalances over the medium term.

4. The PA's General Budget

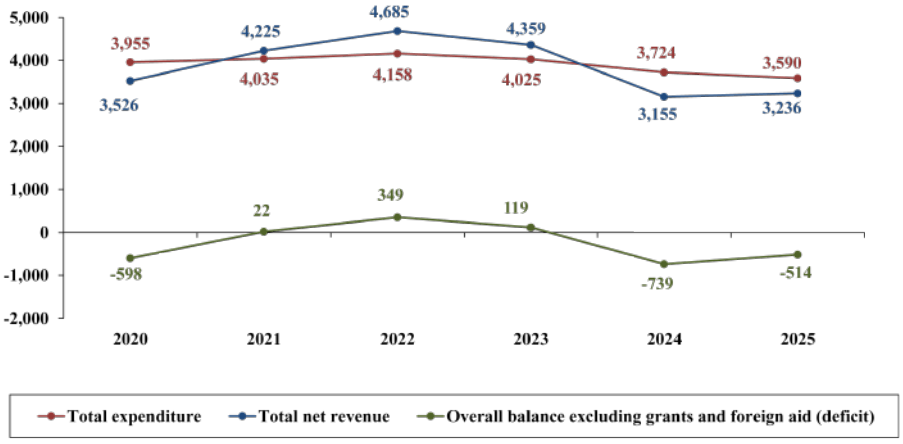
The general budget reflects the government's financial activity within a given year, encompassing revenues and expenditures in their various forms, the overall balance in terms of surplus or deficit, the use of any surplus, and the mechanisms for financing deficits.

The data presented below cover the period 2020–2025, underscoring the repercussions of the devastating Israeli war on GS, alongside Israeli policies, most notably the suspension of clearance revenue transfers, as well as practices of financial appropriation, effectively amounting to piracy, in addition to deductions and arbitrary withholdings.

Table 16/2: PA Fiscal Operations 2020–2025 Cash Basis ($ million)[71]

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Gross domestic revenue	1,210	1,539	1,776	1,639	1,313	1,490
Clearance revenue	2,400	2,777	3,146	2,731	1,856	1,755
Tax refund	–84	–91	–237	–11	–14	–9
Total net revenue	3,526	4,225	4,685	4,359	3,155	3,236
Annual growth rate (%)	+7.1	+19.8	+10.9	–7	–27.6	+2.6
Wage expenditure	1,891	1,988	2,048	1,894	1,658	1,687
Non-wage expenditure	1,659	1,624	1,614	1,612	1,568	1,484
Net lending	351	373	366	365	403	372
Earmarked payments	54	50	131	154	94	47
Total expenditures	3,955	4,035	4,158	4,025	3,724	3,590
Annual growth rate (%)	+8.1	+2	+3	–3.2	–7.5	–3.6
Current balance	–429	190	527	334	–569	–354
Development expenditure	169	168	178	215	170	160
Overall balance excluding grants and foreign aid (deficit)	–598	22	349	119	–739	–514
Grants and aid	464	321	345	358	810	962
Overall balance including grants and foreign aid	–134	343	694	477	71	448

PA Fiscal Operations 2020–2025 Cash Basis ($ million)



PA fiscal operations over the period 2020–2025, on a cash basis, exhibit a volatile trajectory marked by cumulative structural fragility, the severity of which intensifies during periods of political and economic shocks. Although total net revenues recorded a relative improvement in 2020–2022, driven by a modest recovery in both domestic and clearance revenues, this trajectory began to reverse in 2023 and deteriorated sharply in 2024. In that year, gross domestic revenues declined to $1,313 million, while clearance revenues fell to $1,856 million. Consequently, total net revenues contracted by 27.6%, thereby marking one of the most severe episodes of fiscal contraction in the PA's history.

Official estimates issued by the Palestinian Ministry of Finance indicate that Israel has withheld approximately 7 billion shekels of clearance revenues between 2019 and early 2025, equivalent to about $1.9 billion (based on an average exchange rate of 3.65 shekels per US dollar). This withholding has been a key driver in deepening the liquidity crisis facing the Palestinian Treasury. In turn, it has contributed to the widening fiscal deficit and weakened the capacity of the public budget to meet its basic obligations, particularly salary payments and the financing of essential public services. This situation has unfolded amid a comprehensive war that has severely eroded the foundations of the Palestinian economy, thereby shifting the budget from a policy tool for economic management into a framework for crisis containment and fiscal survival.[72]

As for the expenditure, the data indicate that total expenditures remained relatively stagnant in 2024, declining to $3,724 million. This reflects a constrained attempt to contain the fiscal deficit under severe resource scarcity; however, such containment was not the outcome of structural fiscal reform, but rather of acute financial compression. In parallel, the current balance deficit widened to $569 million, highlighting the inability of available revenues to cover essential obligations, particularly wage payments and net lending.

In 2025, there was a nominal recovery in revenues, as total net revenue increased to $3,236 million, representing a growth rate of 2.6%. This improvement was driven mainly by higher gross domestic revenue, which reached $1,490 million; nevertheless, this recovery remains fragile and lacks sustainability.

By contrast, total expenditures in 2025 stood at approximately $3,590 million, alongside a marginal rise in wage expenditure to $1,687 million. Consequently, the current deficit narrowed to $354 million in 2025, compared to $569 million in the preceding year.

Accordingly, these indicators suggest that the PA's general budget has become increasingly constrained by Israel's fiscal policies of financial coercion and withholding, alongside the repercussions of the war of genocide, which has intensified economic contraction, as well as reliance on foreign support. Taken together, these factors have undermined the budget's capacity to fulfil its developmental function, effectively reducing it to an instrument of crisis management and financial survival.

5. Work, Unemployment and Poverty

Human capital is a core pillar of economic activity and production processes, encompassing a diverse workforce of skilled artisans, professionals, specialists and experts across multiple fields, whether in the public or private sectors or within non-profit civil society institutions, alongside other factors of production such as land, capital and investment. It is closely linked to demographic change, particularly the sustained growth of population and its progression across different age cohorts, which gradually translates into increasing inflows into the labour market. In parallel, the workforce's aspirations to secure adequate employment opportunities intensify, in order to avoid unemployment and reduce the risk of falling into poverty.

Table 17/2: Distribution of Palestinians Aged 15 Years and Above in WB and GS by Labor Force and Unemployment 2020–2025 (thousand)[73]

		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025*
WB	Labor force	867	918	976	998	995	1,018
	Workers	730	776	848	815	682	738
	Unemployed	137	142	128	183	313	280
	% of unemployment	15.7	15.5	13.1	18.3	31.4	27.5
GS	Labor force	424	490	527	535	–	–
	Workers	226	260	288	290	–	–
	Unemployed	198	230	239	245	–	–
	% of unemployment	46.6	46.9	45.3	45.8	–	–
WB & GS	Labor force	1,291	1,408	1,503	–	–	–
	Workers	956	1,036	1,136	–	–	–
	Unemployed	335	372	367	–	–	–
	% of unemployment	25.9	26.4	24.4	–	–	–
Workers in Israel		125	124	164	107	21	31.4
Workers in WB settlements			21	29	16	15	20.4

* Data of Q4 2025.

Note: The 2023 data for GS refer to Q3 2023. No data are available beyond this period due to the war on GS.

a. Work and Unemployment

Table 17/2 shows that the Palestinian labor market over the period 2020–2025 was marked by pronounced structural fragility and severe volatility, alongside a general trajectory of deterioration, particularly following the war of genocide on GS and its deep repercussions on the economic and productive base. Consequently, analytical reference to labor characteristics in GS has become largely untenable, as most standard concepts and indicators used to assess labor force attributes no longer apply under the conditions generated by the war of genocide.

In this regard, PCBS and the Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA) stated in a press release that approximately half of the labour force in WB and GS was unemployed in 2025, with an overall unemployment rate of 46%. This, however, conceals stark territorial disparities, amounting to 28% in WB compared to 78% in GS, while more detailed figures have not been released.[74]

At the level of WB, the labor market appears to have been relatively more resilient in absorbing shocks than its counterpart in GS; nevertheless, it was not immune to broader adverse spillovers. The labor force expanded from 867 thousand in 2020 to 998 thousand in 2023, before marginally declining to 995 thousand in 2024. Concurrently, 2024 witnessed a pronounced contraction in employment, with the number of workers falling from 815 thousand in 2023 to 682 thousand, thereby doubling unemployment to 313 thousand and raising the unemployment rate to 31.4%. Subsequently, according to data for Q4 2025, the labor force reached about 1.02 million. Although employment partially recovered to 738 thousand and unemployment declined to 280 thousand, the unemployment rate remained elevated at 27.5%. This pattern points to a fragile and unsustainable recovery, driven primarily by short-term factors rather than any substantive structural improvement in the economy.

In GS, by contrast, the labor market underwent an almost complete collapse, thereby underscoring the catastrophic economic and humanitarian conditions during the war of genocide. Whereas the labor force had remained relatively stable at about 500 thousand during 2020–2023, with employment around 250 thousand and an unemployment rate not exceeding 47%, employment declined sharply as a result of the war. Consequently, record unemployment levels were observed in 2024–2025, reflecting a near-total paralysis of economic activity, the disintegration of local labor markets, and an increasing reliance on humanitarian assistance in lieu of labor income.

With regard to workers employed in Israel and Israeli settlements in WB, their numbers declined markedly in 2024 owing to the stringent closures imposed by Israel following the assault on GS, falling to about 36 thousand after having reached approximately 123 thousand in 2023. Subsequently, data for Q4 2025 indicate a limited recovery, with the number rising to about 52 thousand (see table 17/2).

In light of the foregoing, 2024 and 2025 constitute a pronounced negative turning point in the trajectory of the labor market in WB and GS, as unemployment shifted from an already elevated structural level to widespread, mass unemployment, particularly in GS, while its effects extended into WB. Consequently, any relative improvement in 2025 indicators should not be construed as economic recovery; rather, it reflects a form of crisis management in the absence of productive capacity, under continued Israeli constraints, and amid the ongoing erosion of the Palestinian economic base.

b. Poverty and Food Insecurity

Poverty is closely associated with unemployment levels, the efficiency of the labor market, and the real wages earned by workers. In the Palestinian context, in 2022, the minimum monthly wage was set by a Cabinet decision at 1,880 shekels (about $600), with the objective of supporting incomes and strengthening households' capacity to meet living costs. However, its effective implementation has remained limited in the WB and is largely absent in the GS. According to labor force survey data for the WB, Q4 2025, issued by PCBS, 14.6% of private sector employees earn below the minimum wage, representing about 40 thousand workers. For this group, the average monthly wage is 1,442 shekels (about $460), while the average daily wage stands at about 136 shekels (about $44), with average weekly working hours of about 41.3 hours.[75] Taken together, these figures highlight a clear disparity between the statutory minimum wage and actual earnings, thereby underscoring the fragility of the labor market and the weakness of enforcement and oversight mechanisms.

In the GS, by contrast, about 89% of private sector wage employees earned below the minimum monthly wage in 2022, with an average monthly income of about 697 shekels (about $197.5).[76]

This wage disparity between the WB and the GS reflects a deep structural imbalance within the Palestinian labor market, stemming from differences in economic conditions, employment opportunities, and restrictions on productive activity. While the WB benefits relatively from greater mobility, a more diversified economy, and the partial absorption of labor into the Israeli labor market, the GS remains constrained by a prolonged blockade, severe economic contraction, and

the weakened capacity of the private sector to generate employment, all of which continue to suppress wage levels.

Food insecurity represents one of the gravest consequences of chronic poverty and declining income in Palestinian society, particularly in light of the rapid developments witnessed across the Palestinian territories during 2024 and 2025. In GS, the genocide and its far-reaching repercussions, compounded by the blockade on crossings and the obstruction of humanitarian aid, have dramatically exacerbated the food crisis. Indeed, multiple assessments indicate that the overwhelming majority of the population (1.84 million) is experiencing acute food insecurity, with broad segments classified under the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 (Crisis), IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) and even IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe), the highest level within the international food security scale. This situation reflects households' growing inability to meet basic food needs as a result of collapsing purchasing power, soaring prices, and the severe decline in local production.[77]

In 2025, the food situation remained highly fragile despite a temporary improvement in the flow of humanitarian aid. Indeed, UN agencies reports indicated that approximately 77% of the population in the GS continued to face high levels of acute food insecurity, while risks of acute malnutrition persisted.[78]

By contrast, although the WB did not experience food insecurity at the same severity as the GS, the broader economic deterioration, marked by deep recession, rising unemployment, and declining purchasing power, adversely affected the nutritional status of vulnerable households. As a result, an increasing number of families faced reduced incomes and rising food prices, constraining their ability to secure adequate and balanced diets, although still less severe than in the GS.[79]

Overall, these conditions reflect the compounded effects of ongoing conflict, restrictions on movement and humanitarian access, and declining local production. Consequently, food security has become a central policy concern in both WB and GS. Reports further point to the urgent need for sustained interventions to improve food access, maintain essential food and health support systems, and address chronic malnutrition before it translates into long-term demographic and public health consequences.

6. Industrial Activity

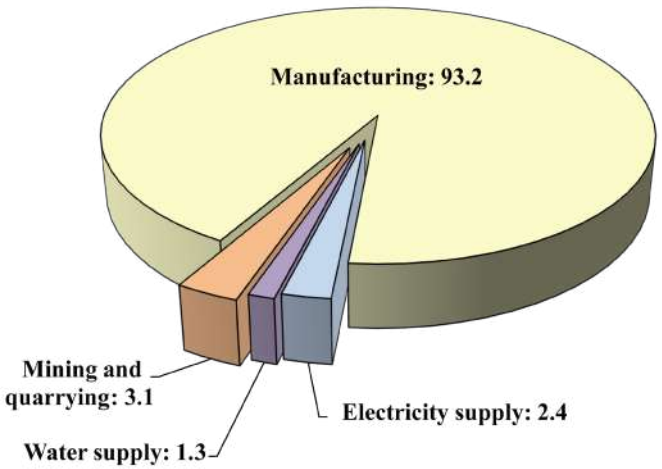
The 1967 occupied territories possess significant potential for industrial development. However, realizing this potential is contingent upon ending Israeli occupation and, in parallel, ensuring a genuine commitment to economic development and structural progress.

Table 18/2: Industrial GDP in PA Territories 2020–2025 at Constant Prices ($ million)[80]

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025*
Mining and quarrying	49.9	49.7	48.8	63	66.4	64.5
Manufacturing	1,500.7	1,537.7	1,623	1,821.8	1,730.6	1,914
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	138.6	146	160.1	113.2	46.7	49.3
Water supply, sewerage and waste treatment	55.2	56.7	56	54	31.4	26.9
Total	**1,744.4**	**1,790.1**	**1,887.9**	**2,052**	**1,875.1**	**2,054.7**
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	–15.9	+2.6	+5.5	+8.7	–8.6	+9.6
% of GDP	12.4	11.9	12.1	13.3	15.7	16.5

* Preliminary estimates

Industrial GDP by Activity 2025 (%)



Industrial GDP in PA Territories 2020–2025 at Constant Prices ($ million)

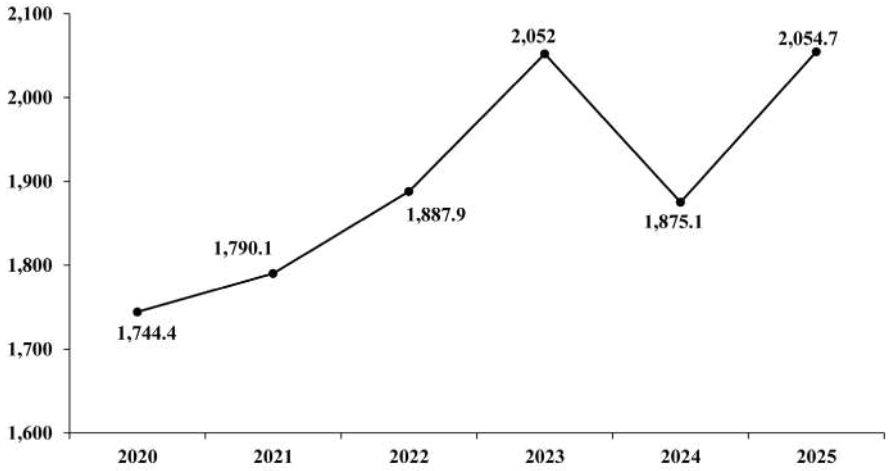


Table 18/2 indicates that industrial GDP in the WB and GS over the period 2020–2025 followed a fluctuating path, reflecting the fragility of the industrial productive base and its vulnerability to recurrent economic and political shocks. Following the sharp contraction in 2020, when output reached approximately $1.74 billion in constant prices, the sector gradually recovered during 2021–2023, supported by a relative improvement in manufacturing activity. Consequently, it peaked in 2023 at about $2.05 billion, with annual growth of 8.7%. Nevertheless, this recovery proved unsustainable, as 2024 recorded a notable decline to around $1.88 billion, representing an 8.6% contraction. This downturn occurred in the context of the war of genocide and severe disruptions to production and supply chains, particularly in the GS.

By contrast, as shown in table 18/2, the year 2025 reflects a partial rebound, with industrial GDP rising again to approximately $2.05 billion and registering growth of about 9.6%. In parallel, the sector's share of total GDP increased to 16.5% compared to 15.7% in 2024, thereby indicating a renewed yet still fragile contribution of industry to the Palestinian economy in the post-shock period.

Regarding the structure of industrial activities and their respective contributions in 2025, manufacturing remains dominant in the Palestinian industrial sector, with an estimated value of $1,914 million, accounting for approximately 93.2%

of total industrial output. This dominance confirms the continued transformation-oriented and structurally limited nature of Palestinian industry, as well as its heavy reliance on a single productive activity. Mining and quarrying rank second at $64.5 million (about 3.1%), followed by electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply at $49.3 million (2.4%). Meanwhile, water supply, sewerage, and waste management occupy the lowest position, contributing only $26.9 million, or 1.3% of total industrial GDP, thereby reflecting persistent structural imbalances and underinvestment in the basic infrastructure required to support industrial production.

Overall, the figures for 2024–2025 indicate that, despite the relative improvement in 2025, industrial recovery remains partial and uneven. In effect, it is driven almost entirely by manufacturing, while other activities remain marginal or in decline. Consequently, this pattern underscores the need for more integrated industrial policies aimed at diversifying the productive base and enhancing the sustainability of industrial growth in WB and GS.

7. Agricultural Activity

There is a growing need in the PA territories to maximize the use of all arable land and intensify agricultural activity, as a means of reinforcing Palestinian identity and countering the expanding settlement drive.

Table 19/2: Agricultural GDP in PA Territories 2020–2025 at Constant Prices ($ million)[81]

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025**
Agricultural GDP*	1,001	993.9	938.6	679	582.3	622.8
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	–9.1	–0.7	–5.6	–27.7	–14.2	–7
% of GDP	7.1	6.6	6	4.4	4.9	5

* Includes forestry and fishing activities.

** Preliminary estimates.

Agricultural GDP in PA Territories 2020–2025 at Constant Prices ($ million)

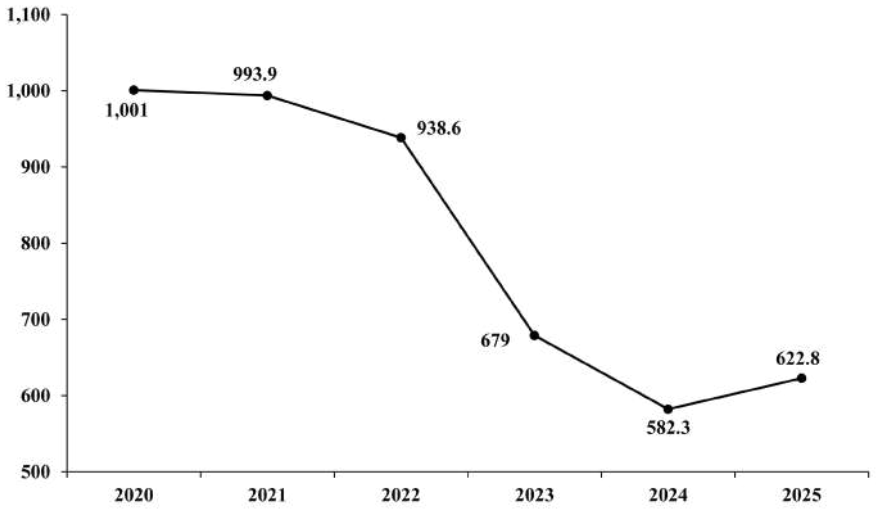


Table 19/2 shows that agricultural GDP followed a clear contractionary trend during 2020–2024, declining from about $1 billion to nearly $582 million, with successive negative growth rates that peaked at –27.7% in 2023. The sector's contribution to GDP also fell from 7.1% in 2020 to 4.4% in 2023, before improving slightly to 4.9% in 2024. In 2025, signs of partial recovery emerged, as agricultural GDP rose to about $623 million and its share of GDP increased to 5%. These trends reflect the deterioration of field, security and logistical conditions during the war on GS, including restricted access to farmland, damage to agricultural infrastructure, rising input costs, and growing pressure on water resources and arable land, despite recent signs of relative stabilization.

An analysis by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) found that damage to cropland in GS had reached 87% by late September 2025. Most greenhouses and irrigation wells were also destroyed, effectively halting local food production and depriving thousands of families of their main source of livelihood.[82]

A FAO report indicates that about 72 thousand farming and herding families in WB, nearly two-thirds of all agricultural families, experienced agricultural income losses in 2025, alongside a sharp decline in crop and livestock production. This reflects the deterioration of agricultural activity not only in GS, but also in WB,

due to growing Israeli restrictions, including "limited access to water, movement restrictions and land access constraints, lack of available and affordable agricultural inputs, and high fuel and transport costs."[83]

Overall, these factors show that the contraction of agricultural output is cumulative in nature and rooted primarily in the Israeli occupation and its arbitrary practices, which have left the agricultural sector highly fragile, transforming it from a key source of food and income into a sector increasingly threatened with collapse.

8. Trade

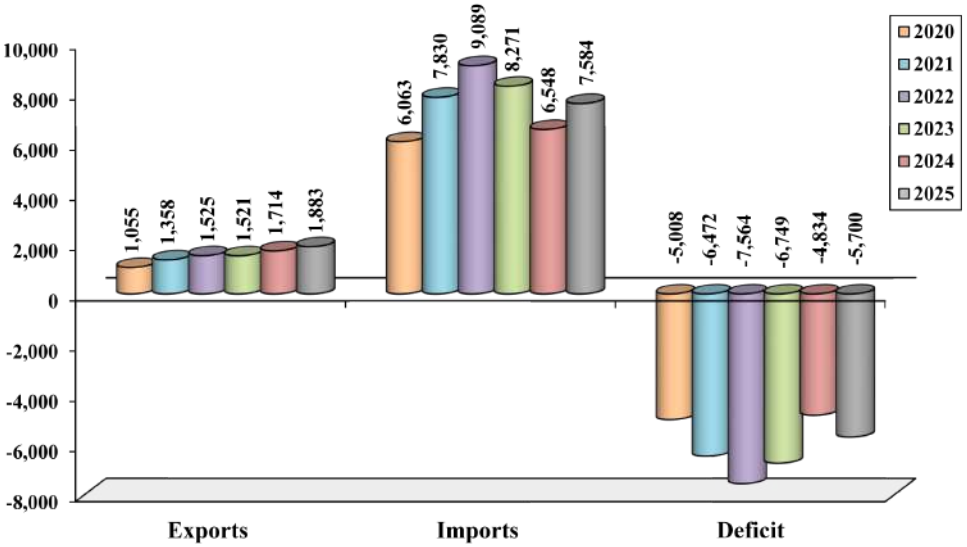
Trade is one of the key economic activities linking countries worldwide as a central form of international relations. Given its importance, the international community has sought to regulate it within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO), in order to safeguard the interests of all parties and ensure the orderly development of trade flows. The PA has pursued integration into this system through a range of trade agreements with Arab and foreign countries, as well as by seeking accession to WTO, with the aim of strengthening the integration of the Palestinian economy into the global economy.

Table 20/2: Commodity Trade Balance in PA Territories 2020–2025 at Current Prices ($ million)[84]

	2020	2021*	2022	2023*	2024	2025*
Trade volume	7,118	9,187	10,614	9,792	8,262	9,467
Exports	1,055	1,358	1,525	1,521	1,714	1,883
Imports	6,063	7,830	9,089	8,271	6,548	7,584
Deficit	–5,008	–6,472	–7,564	–6,749	–4,834	–5,700
% Exports to GDP	6.8	7.5	8	8.2	10.7	11
% Deficit to total imports	82.6	82.7	83.2	81.6	73.8	75.2
% Deficit to GDP	32.2	35.7	39.5	36.2	30.2	33.2

* There are limited differences due to approximation.

PA Trade Indicators 2020–2025 at Current Prices ($ million)



Commodity trade indicators in the PA territories during 2020–2025 show a contraction in overall trade activity alongside a widening structural trade deficit, with notable fluctuations in 2024 and 2025. Total trade peaked at $10.6 billion in 2022, then declined sharply to $8.3 billion in 2024, the lowest level in the period, before partially recovering to about $9.5 billion in 2025. The 2024 contraction is primarily linked to deteriorating economic conditions amid the ongoing Israeli genocidal war on GS, in addition to restrictions on the movement of goods between WB, GS and Israel, which significantly constrained both exports and imports of essential goods.[85]

Exports rose to about $1.9 billion in 2025, up from about $1.5 billion in 2023, reflecting a partial recovery in key productive sectors following improved access to regional and international markets, particularly in agriculture and manufacturing. Imports, by contrast, fell from around $8.3 billion in 2023 to $6.5 billion in 2024, before rising again to about $7.6 billion in 2025, reflecting a partial rebound in domestic demand following a limited easing of import restrictions (see table 20/2).

The trade deficit temporarily declined in 2024 to about $4.8 billion, down from roughly $6.7 billion in 2023, mainly due to the sharp drop in imports. It

then increased again in 2025 to around $5.7 billion alongside a partial recovery in trade activity. Exports as a share of GDP rose to 11% in 2025, while the trade deficit remained high at 75.2% of total imports in the same year, highlighting the economy's continued dependence on imports to satisfy domestic demand. The deficit also reached 33.2% of GDP in 2025 (see table 20/2), underscoring persistent structural vulnerabilities and the limited capacity to achieve trade balance.

It is noteworthy that most PA trade during 2024–2025 was effectively concentrated in WB, given the severe and longstanding restrictions imposed on GS, which have significantly limited its integration into both domestic and external commercial activity. This geographic imbalance in Palestinian trade has deepened markedly since the onset of the genocide war on GS, as the Strip's commercial role was virtually suspended, while only limited activity persisted in WB within the narrow constraints of the Israeli movement and exchange regime.

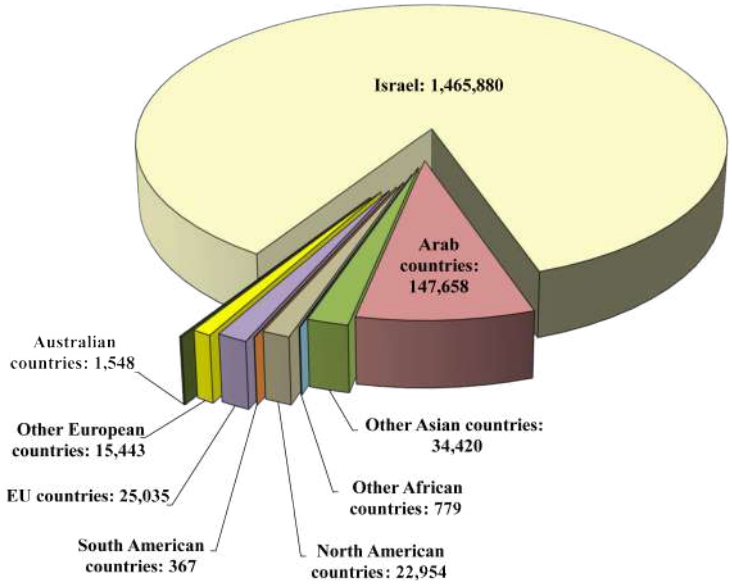
In this context, the war on GS led to an almost total paralysis of its trade system, following the complete closure of crossings and the halt of imports and exports, which deprived the commercial sector of formal operating channels. Economic activity during this period remained partial and highly constrained, driven primarily by humanitarian aid rather than genuine market-based trade. Consequently, a shadow economy became dominant, characterized by informal stalls and unregulated markets, with goods largely consisting of re-sold aid items used to secure minimal liquidity and household income amid the collapse of formal supply chains and and the erosion of the regulatory functions of economic institutions. This reflects a deep structural distortion in the GS economy, where remaining activity signals not recovery, but survival mechanisms under siege, starvation conditions, and the destruction of the productive base.

Table 21/2: Volume of Palestinian Trade, Exports and Imports in Goods in PA Territories by Group of Countries 2023–2024 ($ thousand)[86]

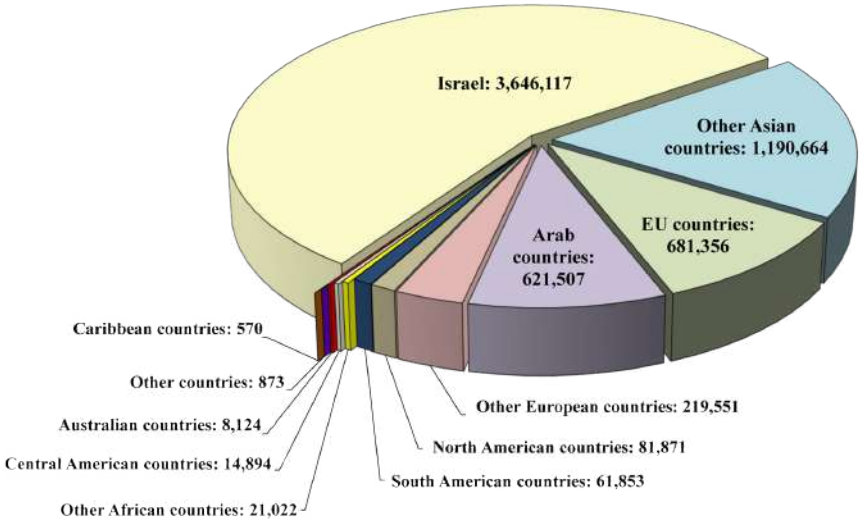
Countries	Trade volume		Palestinian exports to:		Palestinian imports from:	
	2023	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024
Israel	5,714,557	5,111,997	1,277,616	1,465,880	4,436,941	3,646,117
Asian Arab countries	732,548	631,205	154,624	142,308	577,924	488,897
Other Asian countries	1,713,145	1,225,084	31,348	34,420	1,681,797	1,190,664
African Arab countries	172,701	137,960	3,402	5,350	169,299	132,610
Other African countries	21,017	21,801	365	779	20,652	21,022
North American countries	123,606	104,825	23,107	22,954	100,499	81,871
Central American countries	26,839	14,894	–	–	26,839	14,894
Caribbean countries	859	570	–	–	859	570
South American countries	58,523	62,220	428	367	58,095	61,853
EU countries	890,275	706,391	18,302	25,035	871,973	681,356
Other European countries	326,948	234,994	10,498	15,443	316,450	219,551
Australian countries	10,347	9,672	1,696	1,548	8,651	8,124
Other countries	557	873	–	–	557	873
Total	**9,791,922**	**8,262,486**	**1,521,388**	**1,714,084**	**8,270,535**	**6,548,404**

Note: Minor discrepancies in the total export and import figures are due to rounding.

Palestinian Exports in Goods by Group of Countries 2024
($ thousand)



Palestinian Imports in Goods by Group of Countries 2024
($ thousand)



At the geographic level, the data in Table 21/2 reveal a pronounced structural imbalance in the distribution of Palestinian goods trade during 2023–2024, most notably reflected in Israel's overwhelming dominance over trade flows. In 2024, Israel accounted for about 86% of total goods exports, valued at roughly $1.5 billion, and 56% of total goods imports, amounting to about $3.6 billion. This underscores the high degree of trade dependency and forced integration with the Israeli market. The situation is largely driven by the restrictions imposed under the Paris Protocol, Israel's control over crossings and borders, and logistical constraints that limit the Palestinian economy's access to external markets. [87]

By contrast, Palestinian exports to Arab countries remained limited in 2024, totaling about $148 million, or 8.6% of total exports, while imports from Arab countries reached approximately $622 million, representing 9.5% of total imports. This reflects weak Arab-Palestinian trade integration despite geographic proximity, due to political restrictions, transport constraints, and the absence of independent trade channels. Likewise, exports to EU countries remained highly marginal in 2024, at about $25 million, or 1.5% of total exports, compared to relatively high imports of about $681.4 million, accounting for 10.4% of total imports. This highlights unequal access to European markets and growing dependence on European industrial and consumer imports without a comparable export capacity.

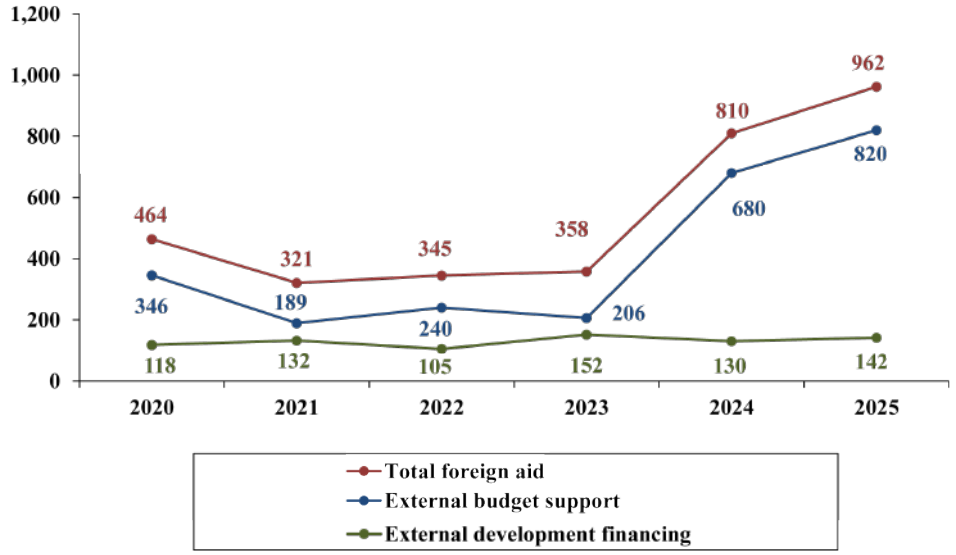
9. External Financing and Foreign Aid

External financing has long been closely linked to the Palestinian context, particularly following the establishment of the PA under Israeli occupation and the severe constraints accompanying it, as well as the PA's acute dependence on such support, which was initially directed primarily toward economic and social development plans. However, expanding public expenditure and the growing budget deficit led to most external aid being redirected toward deficit financing, while only a limited share was allocated to development projects.

Table 22/2: External Financing to the PA 2020–2025 ($ million)[88]

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
External budget support	346	189	240	206	680	820
External development financing	118	132	105	152	130	142
Total foreign aid	**464**	**321**	**345**	**358**	**810**	**962**
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	–5.7	–30.8	+7.5	+3.8	+126	+18.8
% of Development financing out of total foreign aid	25.4	41.1	30.4	42.5	16.1	14.8

External Financing to the PA 2020–2025 ($ million)



The evolution of donor support to the PA during 2020–2025 reveals sharp fluctuations, underscoring the fragility of external financing and its close dependence on political and security dynamics. Total foreign aid declined from $464 million in 2020 to $321 million in 2021, marking a sharp annual contraction of 30.8%, before partially recovering in 2022 and 2023 to reach $358 million in 2023. This recovery was driven by modest increases in both external budget support and external development financing. However, the most significant shift occurred in 2024, when total foreign aid surged to $810 million, recording an exceptional growth rate of 126%. This increase was driven primarily by the sharp

rise in external budget support, which reached $680 million, amid emergency responses to the repercussions of the Israeli genocide war on GS and the severe financial crisis facing the PA due to declining revenues and the withholding of clearance revenues.

At the same time, the share allocated to development projects declined markedly in 2024, falling to only 16.1% of total foreign aid, compared to levels exceeding 40% in some previous years. This reflects a shift in donor priorities from long-term development financing toward emergency and relief-oriented funding aimed at covering current expenditures and reducing the fiscal deficit.

This trend continued in 2025, with development financing accounting for just 14.8% of total foreign aid, which reached about $962 million, representing a modest increase of 18.8% over 2024. This indicates renewed contraction in international development support and the PA's growing dependence on unstable and seasonal funding, further weakening fiscal planning and limiting the implementation of sustainable development programs.

These indicators show that donor support to the PA has remained largely conditional and unsustainable, driven more by political, security and emergency considerations than by a long-term development vision. This has reinforced reliance on budget support at the expense of productive projects and weakened the Palestinian economy's ability to build an independent and sustainable development base.

Conclusion

The demographic and economic indicators in WB and GS during 2024 and 2025 reflect an unprecedented reality shaped by the genocidal war against GS and the intensification of aggressive policies and restrictions in the WB. Together, these developments have driven profound changes in the Palestinian demographic and economic structure.

Despite continued population growth and the persistence of a relatively young population with comparatively high fertility rates, the war has had severe demographic repercussions, including large-scale human losses, mass forced displacement, and disruptions in the geographic and age distribution of the

population. Sharp humanitarian and demographic disparities have also emerged among Palestinian communities, while the refugee issue remains a structural reality reflecting the ongoing displacement crisis and the absence of a just solution.

Economically, the WB and GS entered one of the deepest phases of economic collapse in their contemporary history, particularly in GS, where infrastructure and productive capacities were nearly destroyed. This collapse was marked by an unprecedented contraction in GDP, a sharp decline in GDP per capita, record levels of unemployment and poverty, and a severe deterioration in food security.

These developments exposed entrenched structural weaknesses in the economies of WB and GS, most notably deep dependence on the Israeli economy, a weak productive base, fragile public finances, and heavy reliance on external aid. At the same time, the widespread destruction of the health, education and infrastructure sectors further undermined human development and weakened societal and institutional recovery capacities.

In light of these indicators, several future scenarios emerge. The continuation of aggression and the blockade would further deepen economic contraction and intensify the humanitarian and social crisis. Conversely, a lasting ceasefire and the opening of crossings could enable partial reconstruction, though recovery would likely remain fragile unless the underlying structural constraints and economic dependency are addressed.

The most favorable scenario, however, depends on a fundamental political shift that ends the aggression and lifts the blockade, enabling Palestinians to exercise sovereignty over their resources and border crossings. This could create the conditions for comprehensive reconstruction and a national development strategy focused on strengthening domestic production, expanding access to Arab and international markets, and reducing dependence on the Israeli economy.

Accordingly, demographic resilience must be accompanied by a comprehensive political and developmental path. The future of the Palestinian economy remains tied to ending Israeli occupation and securing sovereignty over land and resources. It also requires a transition from emergency relief to reconstruction and sustainable development through an integrated national program aimed at rebuilding infrastructure, supporting productive sectors, and restoring geographic and institutional unity between WB and GS.

Endnotes

[1] For further details on population estimates and demographic projections of Palestinians worldwide through 2050, see Youssef Courbage and Hala Naufal, *Al-Filastiniyyun fi Al-'Alam: Dirasah Dimoghrafiyyah* (*Palestinians Worldwide: A Demographic Study)* (*Doha:* Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2020).

[2] See Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), *Palestinians at the End of 2024* (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2024), https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/media/q1gjxyyn/book2710.pdf; and PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of 2025* (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2025), https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/media/enflushk/book2734.pdf

[3] See Ibid.

[4] See Ibid.

[5] See Ibid.

[6] See Ibid.

[7] See Ibid.; and PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of 2024*.

[8] PCBS, On the Occasion of the International Day of Older Persons, 1/10/2024, https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_IntDayOlderP2024E.pdf

[9] See Ibid.; and PCBS, On the Occasion of the International Day of Older Persons, 1/10/2025, https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_IntDayOlderP2025E.pdf

[10] PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of 2025*.

[11] Ibid.

[12] See Ibid.; and PCBS, *Statistical Yearbook of Palestine 2025* (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2025), https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/media/df3bkm2e/book2733.pdf

[13] PCBS, *Statistical Yearbook of Palestine 2023* (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2023), https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2688.pdf

Note: Regarding natural population growth rates and population density in the WB and GS, PCBS did not release updated data for 2024–2025.

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[16] PCBS, presents a brief on the status of the Palestinian people at The end of 2025, PCBS, 31/12/2025, https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_PalPeopleEnd2025E.pdf

[17] Ibid.

[18] PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of 2024*; PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of 2025*; PCBS, *Statistical Yearbook of Palestine 2025*; and PCBS, *Statistical Yearbook of Palestine 2023* (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2023), https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2688.pdf

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[20] Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2025*, no. 76, table 2.10, https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/publications/DocLib/2025/2.ShnatonPopulation/st02_10.pdf

[21] See Official Report: Decline in Fertility Rate in Jordan.. and a Slight Increase in Twin Births in 2024, site of Roya News, 12/10/2025, https://royanews.tv (in Arabic); and World Population Day, site of Department of Statistics (DoS) (Jordan), 11/7/2024, https://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/DataBank/News/Public_News/Population_Day.pdf (in Arabic)

[22] UNRWA in Action, site of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), June 2025, https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/unrwa_in_action_2025_f.pdf

[23] Ibid.; and UNRWA in Action, UNRWA, July 2024, https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/unrwa_in_action_2024_eng_v3.pdf

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[25] Report on the Conditions of Palestinians from Syria during 2025: Continued Humanitarian and Living Deterioration, site of Palestinian Refugees Portal, 6/2/2026, https://refugeesps.net/post/33628; and Palestinians of Syria in 2025: 40% Still Displaced and Ongoing Humanitarian Fagility Despite Shifts, site of Syria TV, 18/2/2026, https://www.syria.tv/فلسطينيو-سوريا-في-2025-04-ما-زالوا-نازحين-وهشاشة-إنسانية-رغم-التحولات

[26] Report on the Conditions of Palestinians from Syria during 2025: Continued Humanitarian and Living Deterioration, Palestinian Refugees Portal, 6/2/2026.

[27] Palestinians of Syria in 2025: 40% Still Displaced and Ongoing Humanitarian Fagility Despite Shifts, Syria TV, 18/2/2026.

[28] UNRWA in Action, UNRWA, July 2024; and UNRWA in Action, UNRWA, June 2025.

[29] See "Palestinian Population in Lebanon: Findings from UNRWA's Digital Identity Verification," UNRWA, 2025, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/report-palestinian-population-in-lebanon-findings-from-unrwas-digital-identity-verification/

[30] See Ibid.

[31] See Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, Central Administration of Statistics – Lebanon, and PCBS, *Population and Housing Census in Palestinian Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon 2017: Key Findings Report* (Beirut: Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, 2018), https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2356.pdf

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[33] See PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of 2025*.

[34] Approximate figures rounded to one decimal place; see PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of 2025*.

[35] See PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of 2025*; and see Department of Health, Annual Report 2024, UNRWA, 2024, https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/2024_annual_report_version_1_res.pdf

[36] PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of 2025*; UNRWA in Action, UNRWA, June 2025; and Department of Health, Annual Report 2024, UNRWA, 2024.

[37] Department of Health, Annual Report 2024, UNRWA, 2024.

[38] Dr. Ola Awad, President of the PCBS Highlights the conditions of the Palestinian people through statistical figures and findings, on the occasion of World Refugee Day, 20/6/2024, PCBS, 20/6/2024, https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_WorldRefugeesDay2024E.pdf

[39] See PCBS, *Palestinians at the End of 2025*.

[40] For further details on the Israeli–US displacement plan and the economic policies designed to counter it, see Raed Hillis, Economic Policies to Address Israel's Forced Displacement of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (October 2023 – March 2025), Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 26/5/2025, https://eng.alzaytouna.net/2025/05/26/academic-paper-economic-policies-to-address-israels-forced-displacement-of-palestinians-in-the-gaza-strip-october-2023-march-2025arabic/

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[42] Quds Press, 22/3/2024, https://qudspress.com/123161

[43] Aljazeera.net, 12/4/2025, https://aja.ws/w8vf3k (in Arabic)

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Chapter Three

The Land and the Holy Sites

The Land and the Holy Sites

Introduction

After two years of war in GS, alongside a shifting regional war stretching from WB to Lebanon, Yemen and Iran, as well as Israeli bombardment targeting seven Arab and Muslim countries, it has become necessary to view the phase that began in 2017 as a regional "endgame phase." This phase laid the groundwork for the conflict's escalation to its current level of intensity, as Israel, backed by the US, has sought to impose a decisive resolution across all fronts. Israeli aggression is now aimed at achieving the final objectives for which Israel had been preparing over decades, particularly with regard to *al-Aqsa* Mosque, rather than merely imposing cumulative facts on the ground for the future.

In response to these endgame phase attempts, the Lion's Gate Uprising emerged in 2017, followed by the Marches of Return and the accompanying rounds of armed escalation in 2018. This was succeeded by the Mercy Gate Uprising, which began on 17/2/2019 and succeeded in reopening the *Musalla* of the Mercy Gate, remaining sustained for two months to prevent Israeli police from resealing it. Subsequently, three Jerusalem uprisings unfolded: to block the displacement of residents from Sheikh Jarrah Neighborhood, to prevent the closure of Damascus Gate Plaza, and to stop the 28th of Ramadan incursion into *al-Aqsa* Mosque. These culminated in the Sword of Jerusalem Battle (referred to by Israel as Operation Guardian of the Walls), which culminated in the dispersal of the Jerusalem Day Flag March under resistance rocket fire on 10/5/2021. Later, with the emergence of local battalion formations in Jenin RC, followed by Tulkarm RC and Nur Shams RC, the Unity of the Arenas Battle erupted on 5/8/2022 to forestall their elimination. It was followed by the Spiritual Retreat (*I'tikaf*) Battle on 5/4/2023, and ultimately by Operation al-Aqsa Flood on 7/10/2023.

The comprehensive endgame phase assault targeted Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the right of return, and sought to isolate the Palestinian people and their cause. In response, seven parallel confrontations were launched to counter this

process: five centred on Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa* Mosque, one on the right of return, and the final one aimed at preventing unilateral control over the emerging resistance formations in the WB. Therefore, the Palestinian response was grounded in a firm commitment to core principles, confronting the agendas of elimination with their direct opposites rather than merely seeking to contain them, even if preventing escalation remained an important driver of action.

Anyone examining the history of the conflict with Zionism in Palestine can readily conclude that the nine-year period extending to 2026 has been the most intense and confrontational phase in the history of the conflict. This assessment suggests that Jerusalem has constituted the central arena of the endgame phase. Because Operation al-Aqsa Flood sought to reverse the trajectory of this endgame phase and turn it into one of Israeli retreat, the Israeli response was to double down on decisive resolution and elimination. What had previously been pursued through a relatively gradual combination of political and military instruments was transformed into an immediate wartime objective enforced through overwhelming military power. This was reflected in the genocide in GS, efforts to induce displacement in the WB, the continued Judaization of Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the incorporation of UNRWA into the war itself, attempts to eliminate the right of return, and efforts to suppress any resistance will while establishing a regional order subordinate to the Israeli centre under the doctrine of "peace through strength." This trajectory has also been advanced through the Abraham Accords, conceived as functional agreements aimed at integration into the Zionist project and going beyond the conventional meanings of both "peace" and "normalization."

If this interpretation is correct, it is therefore unsurprising that the endgame war would return to its central arena in Jerusalem after being temporarily de-escalated on the GS front following the Sharm El-Sheikh Declaration on 13/10/2025. This is precisely what followed: Jerusalem once again emerged as a primary arena of the endgame phase, reflected in the demolition of the UNRWA headquarters in the Sheikh Jarrah Neighborhood, the accelerated Judaization of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and efforts to further entrench its Jewish character, and renewed attempts to resolve the issue of mass displacement in central neighbourhoods, particularly al-Bustan and

Batn al-Hawa in Silwan. Simultaneously, displacement pressures intensified in the Sheikh Jarrah Neighborhood, while expansion continued in the eastern desert fringes and Bedouin communities. Efforts also advanced to further sever Jerusalem from its northern hinterland in Ramallah through a series of "Operation Capital Shield" measures. These developments were accompanied by the announcement of new settlements and major expansion projects across Jerusalem.

First: Al-Aqsa Mosque

Al-Aqsa Mosque today stands at a moment of what may be described as a historical exposure, in which the forces that once constrained attempts to erase its identity have largely receded. Over the decade of uprisings (2013–2023), a cumulative configuration had taken shape comprising four main elements: individual operations; mass mobilization in Jerusalem and the 1948 occupied territories with contributions from the WB; popular engagement from outside Palestine; and the involvement of resistance forces from GS. However, the war on GS has effectively neutralized the resistance's ability to engage with developments at *al-Aqsa*, while also producing a heightened deterrent effect on popular mobilization amid scenes of mass destruction. External engagement has, in turn, become largely absorbed by the dynamics of the war in GS and, despite its intensity, has remained increasingly detached from influencing decisive outcomes in *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Within this context, individual operations remain the only component that, at times, continues to respond directly to assaults on *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

Al-Aqsa Mosque has previously experienced two comparable phases of what may be described as historical exposure, coinciding with the intensification of displacement and replacement schemes targeting it. During the *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, which combined popular mobilization with organized armed resistance to the occupation, a key form of deterrence was established. However, following its decline and the resumption of intensified incursions in 2003, the first exposure phase emerged. In response, new protective dynamics were introduced, most notably through "journeys (*Shad al-Rihal*) to *al-Aqsa*," from within the

1948 occupied territories. As escalation continued and incursions were formalized in 2008 through designated time allocations, this defensive framework required further consolidation. Accordingly, the response took the form of the "knowledge platforms" (*Masatib al-'ilm*), revived and sustained by the *Murabitun* (*al-Aqsa* Mosque male and female defenders) in direct confrontation with intrusions. In effect, participation from the 1948 occupied territories, through sustained presence and mobilization (*ribat*) and the knowledge platforms initiative, constituted the central response to this first phase of exposure.

By 2015, Israel had already banned *al-Aqsa* guardianship institutions, blocked the establishment of alternative frameworks, and outlawed the Islamic Movement in the 1948 occupied territories. This generated what can be described as a second moment of exposure,[1] to which the response came through the Knives Uprising and other lone-wolf resistance operations in the same year. Together, these developments marked the emergence of an accumulating deterrence equation in defense of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, unfolding through a series of successive and closely spaced uprisings, as outlined earlier. That equation has now, in turn, reached a third moment of exposure, thereby increasing pressure to formulate new forms of response, none of which have yet materialized and may still be in formation.

At the same time, and in recognition of *al-Aqsa* Mosque's status as the symbolic core of the endgame project, the Judaization agenda has advanced along three main trajectories: temporal and spatial division of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and the foundation of the intangible temple through the imposition of biblical rituals. Within this framework, religious Zionism increasingly assumes that conditions are ripe to move to the next stage of Judaization, encouraged by what it perceives as the current historical exposure of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

1. *Al-Aqsa* Mosque During the GS War

During the GS war, particularly beginning in Ramadan or March 2024, Israel shifted from a reactive approach to actively leveraging the war to advance *al-Aqsa* Mosque into a new stage of Judaization. Accordingly, the main patterns of transformation affecting *al-Aqsa* Mosque during the war in GS can be summarized as follows:

a. *Al-Aqsa* Mosque Siege

On 17/9/2023, coinciding with its assault on *al-Aqsa* Mosque during the extended Jewish holiday season, Israel initiated a policy of siege targeting the mosque. Its courtyards were repeatedly emptied of worshippers[2] that morning and repeatedly throughout the holiday period,[3] while the route leading to Chain Gate, designated as the exit point for Israeli settlers conducting incursions, was also cleared. Israeli forces additionally assaulted the *Murabitun* stationed outside after barring them from entering *al-Aqsa* Mosque.[4] Beginning on 25/9/2023, Israel further restricted access to *al-Aqsa* Mosque, permitting entry only to the employees of the Islamic Awqaf, Affairs and Holy Sites Council in Jerusalem (Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf) and elderly residents of the Old City from the evening prayer until the afternoon prayer (*'Asr*) of the following day.[5] These measures were intended to allow Israeli settlers carrying out incursions to operate with near-exclusive control over *al-Aqsa* Mosque during the final days of the assault season, while preventing both the observance Spiritual Retreat (*I'tikaf*) and the morning presence of *Murabitun*.

With the conclusion of this assault season, Operation al-Aqsa Flood ensued. Israel thereafter maintained the siege of *al-Aqsa* Mosque for several weeks, during which attendance at prayers declined to the extent that it barely filled a single row in al-Qibli Mosque. Moreover, Friday prayers did not surpass 5 thousand worshippers throughout the first ten weeks following the onset of the GS war.[6] These restrictions were eased only during Ramadan,[7] particularly on the twenty-seventh night of the month.[8]

Over the course of the two-year GS war, this policy has continued, albeit with relatively limited easing of restrictions and the selective use of certain occasions, most notably the last Friday of Ramadan and the twenty-seventh night,[9] to obscure the reality of a continuous siege on *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

At the same time, Israel has further entrenched these conditions on the ground by converting checkpoints at the mosque's gates into permanent installations reinforced with metal cages.[10] In addition, it has also expanded the system into four fixed security checkpoints for those entering from outside the Old City, and five for those coming from beyond Jerusalem. Even worshippers arriving from within the Old City are required to pass through at least two checkpoints, including residents living as close as fifty meters from the mosque.

b. Militarization of *al-Aqsa* Mosque

Israel has progressively imposed security measures, beginning with the installation of barbed-wire fencing along sections of the mosque's perimeter wall at points that previously enabled access to *al-Aqsa* Mosque during periods of crowding or through adjacent homes for those familiar with the Old City's pathways. Consequently, worshippers now experience the mosque as a heavily securitized space. This was followed by the upgrading of the existing surveillance system, originally concentrated above the Tankaziyya School, Ablution Gate, and around Remission Gate and the Bani Ghanim Gate Minaret—and its reinforcement with smart, facial-recognition cameras covering much of the mosque's open courtyard.[11] The most significant shift, however, began on 13/3/2024, coinciding with the first Friday of Ramadan, when Israeli authorities deployed armed police patrols to move directly above worshippers during prayer, including in moments of bowing and prostration. This development disrupted the post-1967 status quo, which had been anchored in the principle that "no prayer under the presence of weapons."[12]

Since then, Israeli police have increasingly exercised overt control over *al-Aqsa* Mosque. In practice, they have interrupted prayers to demand identity checks, searched iftar meals of fasting worshippers, and repeatedly disrupted religious lessons, including questioning imams and preachers in the midst of their sermons. This has effectively reduced the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf's role, administered by Jordan, to a narrowly circumscribed management of "Islamic presence" under occupation-imposed spatial and temporal restrictions, after having overseen the mosque's full administration for decades following the 1967 occupation.

By Ramadan or March 2025, an investigative report by Al Quds International Institution (QII) documented 30 military and police positions in and around *al-Aqsa* Mosque. These included a permanent police station in the courtyard of the Dome of the Rock, along with nine foot patrols stationed at fixed points, three of which were reinforced units of more than five personnel each. The following map illustrates the militarization of *al-Aqsa* Mosque as of that date:

Map 1/3: Map of the Militarization of *al-Aqsa* Mosque[13]

c. The Expansion of Partitioning Practices

During the GS war, four new realities were imposed. First, the duration of incursions was further extended[14] to six hours and fifteen minutes daily, compared to three hours when this arrangement was first introduced in 2008, prior to which it did not exist at all. Second, exclusive control by the intruders over the eastern

courtyard of *al-Aqsa* was consolidated, to the extent that it increasingly resembled an undeclared synagogue within the *al-Aqsa* Mosque compound.[15] Third, in 2024, the presence of worshippers along the intruders' movement routes was completely prohibited.[16] Fourth, in 2025, restrictions were tightened further by banning Muslim worshippers from any location that would allow them to see or film the intruders throughout the duration of the incursion.[17] Collectively, these measures effectively granted Israeli intruders unrestricted freedom of movement, as though they were the de facto owners of the mosque during their presence, while confining Palestinian worshippers to al-Qibli Mosque or the inner sections of the Dome of the Rock courtyard. In parallel, the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf guards, administered by Jordan, were barred from accessing exposed service points along the intruders' route and were compelled to remain inside enclosed buildings, domes, or worship chambers whenever their duties were situated near open areas.

These developments continue to expand. In fact, Israeli Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Yariv Levin, addressing Temple groups during a Festival of Lights (*Hanukkah*) celebration held in front of the Moroccan Gate on 21/12/2025, pledged to extend the hours of incursions to include evening periods.[18]

d. Deepening the Jewish Character of *al-Aqsa* Mosque

Since 2019, Temple groups have introduced a new mechanism for advancing the division of *al-Aqsa* Mosque by institutionalizing Jewish religious rituals within the compound. These rituals were framed as the "intangible foundation" of the Temple, conceived as a precursor to its eventual tangible establishment. Over time, settlers escalated these practices incrementally until 24/7/2024, when Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, himself closely associated with these circles, instructed Israeli police at *al-Aqsa* to allow public collective Jewish religious rituals inside the mosque compound.[19] He had already signaled this shift by personally leading a collective prayer at *al-Aqsa* Mosque on 5/6/2024.[20]

Ben-Gvir, who has led the Judaization of *al-Aqsa* Mosque in coordination with Temple groups and the broader Religious Zionist movement, did not stop at legitimizing these rituals. On 26/6/2025, he introduced an additional measure permitting collective dancing, singing, and celebrations inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque.[21] This development further advances the mosque's Judaization by transforming it into a public space for settler religious and nationalist celebration.

This deepening of the Jewish character of *al-Aqsa* Mosque is also evident in the steady increase in the number of settlers storming the compound, as shown in the following table:

Table 1/3: Annual Trend in the Number of Settlers Storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque, According to the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf and Temple Groups

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf figures	34,112[22]	48,238[23]	48,223[24]	53,605[25]	65,364[26]
Temple Groups figures[27]	38,150	54,201	52,853	60,319	73,403

The rise in the number of settlers storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque is clearly evident over the two years of the war on GS, despite discrepancies between the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf and Temple group figures. According to the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf statistics, the increase reached 11% in 2024 and 22% in 2025.

e. Expulsion and Media Blackout at *al-Aqsa* Mosque

An expanding ban regime has effectively restricted access to *al-Aqsa* Mosque, affecting an indeterminate number of regular *Murabitun* and the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf employees, as well as journalists during the war on GS. This has been compounded by a shifting list of activists and reporters subjected to ad hoc expulsions ahead of each escalation cycle. In 2024, 130 individuals publicly reported receiving expulsion orders,[28] rising to 287 in 2025,[29] while many additional cases remain unreported and undocumented.

During 2024–2025, a dual-track policy of media suppression around *al-Aqsa* Mosque has become increasingly apparent. It combines intensified exclusion, harassment, and imprisonment of journalists on "incitement" charges with systematic targeting of *Murabitun* and their documentation efforts. Those "found filming incursions" are expelled, banned from the site, or compelled to delete recorded material.[30]

The cumulative effect has been a near-collapse of independent documentation. In practice, settler-produced content on their own platforms has become the primary source of information about events inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque. This dynamic was particularly evident during the Hebrew New Year (*Rosh Hashanah*) incursion, when the blowing of the horn (*Shofar*) inside the compound on 23–24/9/2025

reportedly occurred five times without contemporaneous documentation, and was only later confirmed through videos published by settlers after the end of their fasting period.[31]

f. The Attempt to Impose So-Called Israeli Sovereignty over *al-Aqsa* Mosque

Bringing *al-Aqsa* Mosque under the administration of the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs was a central objective pursued by the Israeli authorities following the annexation of Jerusalem on 27/6/1967. Sovereignty rests on two foundational pillars: legitimacy and force. An occupying power, by definition, cannot credibly claim sovereignty over the territory it controls, as it lacks the element of legitimacy, and therefore tends to overcompensate through reliance on force. *Al-Aqsa* Mosque has consistently exposed the limits of this logic, given its deeply rooted Islamic legitimacy. As a result, the Israeli occupation has relied heavily on coercive power over time, in the expectation that sustained control would gradually reshape perceptions of legitimacy. However, recurring Palestinian resistance, periodically erupting from *al-Aqsa* Mosque over the decades, has continuously reaffirmed the absence of such legitimacy while also undermining the effectiveness of force through sustained and active opposition. Together, these dynamics continue to erode the attempt to impose Israeli sovereignty over the mosque.

The various measures imposed on *al-Aqsa* Mosque during the GS war can be understood within this theoretical framework of attempted sovereignty. In practice, these efforts are often expressed through direct actions intended to test the extent of presumed control over the site. Over the past two years, two such tests have stood out. The first was the imposition of full control over the mosque's opening and closure during the 12-day war, from dawn on Friday 13/6/2025 to sunset on Tuesday 24/6/2025, when *al-Aqsa* Mosque was fully closed for about 12 days.[32] This marked the first complete closure imposed by Israel since its reopening to worshippers on 16/6/1967.

The second was the imposition of censorship over the Friday sermon and prayers inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque, including a ban on any supplication for GS. Violations by imams, preachers or worshippers were met with arrest or removal from the mosque, while sermon content itself became grounds for detention and exclusion.[33] This measure reflects a long-standing objective pursued since 1967: subordinating *al-Aqsa* Mosque to the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs.

In the wake of these wartime-imposed changes, a de facto reality has consolidated in *al-Aqsa* Mosque in which a parallel Jewish identity has emerged alongside its Islamic character. The next phase of this trajectory centres on deepening this biblical framing through four incremental pathways of Judaization. First, there is the expansion of settler incursion hours and the further entrenchment of temporal division. Second, efforts continue to appropriate the eastern courtyard of *al-Aqsa* Mosque for permanent settler use. Third, there is an intensification of attempts to impose Jewish religious rituals inside the compound, including reported efforts to conduct animal sacrifice during Jewish Passover (*Pesach*) between 1–8/4/2026, alongside the gradual introduction of ritual objects such as the horn (*Shofar*), Torah scrolls and prayer shawls (*Tallit*), etc. The fourth and most consequential pathway involves the progressive erosion of administrative authority over *al-Aqsa* Mosque, through the steady encroachment on the powers of the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf and the transfer of effective control to Israeli police. This includes regulating opening and closing times, managing access and periods of spiritual retreat (*I'tikaf*), controlling sermons and prayer through exclusion policies, and restricting reconstruction and maintenance activities.

2. *Al-Aqsa* During the Major Escalation Seasons

Escalation at *al-Aqsa* Mosque typically unfolds in recurring waves tied to major biblical and Zionist-nationalist holidays, which Temple groups have turned into organized seasons of mobilization and mass incursions into the compound.

Long-term monitoring of these groups indicates four principal escalation seasons each year.[34] The first is Passover (*Pesach*), which falls around April in the Gregorian calendar and lasts eight days. As one of the Three Festivals (*Shalosh Regalim*), it is closely associated with Temple-centered narratives. Activities during this period generally focus on efforts to introduce animal sacrifice rituals into *al-Aqsa* Mosque and to normalize the idea of their future implementation.

The second escalation season coincides with 28 *Iyar* in the Hebrew calendar, the Hebrew anniversary of the completion of Jerusalem's occupation in the 1967 war, officially marked in Israel as Jerusalem Day (*Yom Yerushalayim*). Falling between late May and mid-June, this occasion centers on displays of alleged Israeli "sovereignty" through flag-waving, collective singing and dancing, clapping, and group prostration rituals intended to symbolically assert control over *al-Aqsa*

Mosque and reshape its identity. The Zionist right marks the occasion through the "Flag March" or "Dance of the Flags," during which far-right groups carrying Israeli flags and Temple banners march from the Israeli municipality building along Jaffa Street and attempt to enter the Old City through Damascus Gate. The procession then moves through al-Wad Street near the gates of *al-Aqsa* Mosque amid chants of selected Torah passages and religious songs led by Religious Zionist rabbis, reflecting the fusion of religious ritual and nationalist symbolism.

The third escalation season of incursions is *Tisha B'Av*, which commemorates the destruction of the Temple. Observed on the ninth day of the Hebrew month of *Av*, falling between late July and mid-August in the Gregorian calendar, it lasts one day. During this occasion, Temple groups typically seek to maximize the number of settlers entering *al-Aqsa* Mosque, while replicating practices associated with the anniversary of Jerusalem's occupation, particularly public displays intended to assert alleged "Israeli sovereignty" over the compound.

The fourth and final escalation season is the extended Jewish holiday period, which Temple groups have transformed into the longest and most intensive phase of assaults on *al-Aqsa* Mosque. It begins with the Hebrew New Year (*Rosh Hashanah*), a two-day religious holiday during which particular emphasis is placed on blowing the horn (*Shofar*) in and around *al-Aqsa* Mosque. This is followed by the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), the "Sabbath of Sabbaths," the holiest day in the Jewish religious calendar, marked by total fasting and the suspension of worldly activities, including transportation and driving. Through incursions into *al-Aqsa* Mosque during *Yom Kippur*, Temple groups have gradually sought to revive the notion of the "atonement sacrifice" associated with the High Priest (*Kohen Gadol*), thereby framing entry into the mosque compound on that day as a sacred act.[35] The period from *Rosh Hashanah* to the end of *Yom Kippur*, known as the Ten Days of Repentance (*Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*), has increasingly become a season of incursions and ritual displays centred on al-Aqsa Mosque, with *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* constituting its principal focal points.

One week after *Yom Kippur* comes Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*), one of the Three Festivals (*Shalosh Regalim*) associated with the Temple narrative. Lasting seven days, it also functions as a harvest festival. During this period, Temple groups focus on bringing the Four Kinds (*Arba'ah Minim*), consisting of palm branch (*lulav*), two willows (*aravot*), a minimum of three myrtles (*hadassim*) and

one citron (*etrog*), into al-Aqsa Mosque, thereby symbolically treating the site as the alleged Temple itself. This practice derives from the biblical conception of the Temple as the dwelling place of the Divine Presence (*Shekhinah*), where offerings are presented at its purported site of manifestation. The final observance in this extended holiday cycle is *Simchat Torah*, which marks the completion of the annual Torah reading cycle. During the celebration, Torah scrolls are ceremonially adorned and "presented to the Lord." Although of lesser religious significance than the preceding holidays, it serves as the symbolic culmination of the season. It was on the morning of this occasion that Operation al-Aqsa Flood began on 7/10/2023.

In sum, this final escalation season comprises four major holidays spanning 22 days, including ten principal holy days. Historically, it has constituted the most volatile escalation season targeting *al-Aqsa* Mosque and the season during which most uprisings, *Intifadah*s, and wars sparked by developments at the mosque have erupted.[36] This trajectory ultimately culminated in Operation al-Aqsa Flood on 7/10/2023, which coincided with the morning of *Simchat Torah*, the final day of this extended holiday cycle.

From a broader perspective, five of the ten major confrontations triggered by developments at *al-Aqsa* Mosque since 1990 erupted during this extended holiday season. This highlights the extent to which the religious dimension embedded within these holidays constitutes a central factor in understanding the dynamics of the conflict over *al-Aqsa* Mosque, rather than a marginal or merely technical consideration.

Temple groups face a structural challenge in that these four occasions are concentrated within roughly six months of the year, spanning approximately from the fourth to the tenth month of the Gregorian calendar. Consequently, their efforts to storm *al-Aqsa* Mosque and impose new realities there are largely interrupted during the remaining half of the year. To overcome this constraint, these groups have sought to expand the calendar of religious occasions linked to the Temple narrative and transform them into additional opportunities for incursions into *al-Aqsa* Mosque. One prominent example is the Jewish festival of Purim, which in Jerusalem extends over three days, with the third day (*Shushan Purim*) holding particular significance. Although religiously marginal, the holiday has gained strategic importance for Temple groups because it falls about one month before Passover (*Pesach*), making it an effective preparatory stage for the latter. Beginning

in 2025, Temple groups succeeded in incorporating *Purim* into the calendar of relatively large-scale incursions into *al-Aqsa* Mosque. The following table illustrates the annual increase in the number of settlers storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque during *Shushan Purim*, the day on which the festival is observed in Jerusalem, one day later than in other cities.

Table 2/3: Annual Trend in the Number of Settlers Storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque During *Shushan Purim*

Year	2021[37] (28/2)	2022[38] (17/3)	2023[39] (8/3)	2024[40] (25/3)	2025[41] (16/3)
No. of Settlers	233	122	128	228	555

The second occasion that Temple groups have worked to integrate into the incursion calendar is the Festival of Lights (*Hanukkah*), which typically falls in December and lasts for eight days. Like *Purim*, it is a relatively marginal holiday that entered Jewish tradition at a later historical stage. Nonetheless, its strong association with the Temple narrative has facilitated its incorporation into the schedule of major incursions into *al-Aqsa* Mosque. During *Hanukkah*, these groups have placed particular emphasis on attempts to introduce the menorah into *al-Aqsa* Mosque and to light it at the mosque's gates at night. Since 2024, they have succeeded in elevating the holiday into a central occasion for organized incursions.[42] As a result, Temple groups now operate within a framework of six primary annual occasions for assaults on *al-Aqsa* Mosque, rather than four, reflecting a gradual but sustained escalation. This shift has been incremental. During *Hanukkah* in 2018, the number of settlers storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque did not exceed 619, averaging roughly 103 per day of incursions.[43] The following section outlines the trajectory of this increase since 2021.

Table 3/3: Annual Trend in the Number of Settlers Storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque During the Eight-day *Hanukkah*

Year	2021[44] (29/11–6/12)	2022[45] (19–26/12)	2023[46] (8–15/12)	2024[47] (26/12/2024–2/1/2025)	2025[48] (15–22/12)
No. of Settlers	1,883	1,795	1,332	2,556	2,835
Average per day	313 (six days)	299 (six days)	266 (five days)	426 (six days)	473 (six days)

a. Major Escalation Seasons 2024

The Jewish Passover (*Pesach*) season (23–29/4/2024) witnessed five days of incursions into *al-Aqsa* Mosque out of the holiday's seven days, as incursions were suspended on Friday and Saturday. During this period, a total of 4,345 settlers stormed *al-Aqsa* Mosque,[49] averaging 869 intruders per day, an increase of 27% compared to the previous Passover season in April 2023, which had coincided with the Spiritual Retreat (*I'tikaf*) Battle during Ramadan.

Ahead of this season, 15 rabbis issued a letter to the Israeli government calling for settlers to be permitted to conduct ritual animal slaughter at *al-Aqsa* Mosque.[50] At the same time, the Returning to the Mount (*Chozrim LeHar*) movement offered a reward of 50 thousand shekels (about $13,357) to anyone able to bring a sacrificial offering into the mosque compound.[51] Israeli police also intensified their presence around *al-Aqsa* Mosque through patrols and mobile checkpoints designed to facilitate settler incursions.[52] The settlers performed the Priestly Blessing (*Birkat Kohanim*) ritual near the Western Arched Gate (*Ba'ikah*) overlooking the Dome of the Rock,[53] a ritual previously conducted inside the eastern courtyard of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and brought Torah scrolls into the compound for public readings.[54]

The Hebrew anniversary marking the completion of Jerusalem's occupation (5/6/2024), referred to in Israel as Jerusalem Day (*Yom Yerushalayim*), coincides with the 28th of the Hebrew month of *Iyar*. *Al-Aqsa* Mosque incursion on this occasion involved about 1,600 Israeli settlers, the largest participation recorded for this anniversary since 1967, and included four current and former Israeli ministers. The event featured the widespread display of Israeli flags throughout the *Al-Aqsa* Mosque and repeated public renditions of the Israeli national anthem, without any apparent intervention by Israeli police, in contrast to previous years. It also witnessed the largest collective performance of full-body prostration on the grounds of *Al-Aqsa* Mosque,[55] a practice first introduced there in 2022.

The incursion also witnessed the introduction of black *Tefillin* prayer phylacteries into *al-Aqsa* Mosque, where Rabbi Michael Puah placed them on his head, marking a further step in the gradual introduction of biblical ritual instruments into the mosque compound.[56]

Temple Destruction (*Tisha B'Av*) (13/8/2024), marked a watershed moment in the history of incursions into *al-Aqsa* Mosque for two main reasons. First, it recorded the largest number of settlers storming the compound to date, reaching

about 3 thousand, nearly double previous figures. Furthermore, Israeli police introduced new entry protocols, increasing each group to 200 settlers and allowing three groups to enter simultaneously. This enabled up to 600 settlers storming the compound at any given time, surpassing the number of *al-Aqsa* guards, the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf officials, and mosque staff present on site. This imbalance was further accentuated by restrictions on Muslim worshippers, the tightening siege on the mosque, policies of exclusion, and the sustained targeting of the *Murabitun*.[57]

At the same time, the day marked the sixth incursion into *al-Aqsa* Mosque by Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir since taking office, and his third since 7/10/2023. Ben-Gvir personally oversaw the performance of Jewish religious rituals inside the compound, where dozens of intruders performed full-body prostration before media cameras. He was also seen leading chants of "The People of Israel Live" (*Am Yisrael Chai*) alongside the Israeli national anthem, biblical prayers, and the display of Israeli flags throughout the mosque compound.[58]

Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir Storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque and Overseeing Collective Full-body Prostration[59]

Settlers quickly capitalized on the official backing embodied in Itamar Ben-Gvir's patronage of these rituals and moved to expand them into additional areas within *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Consequently, elements of these practices and

incursions were extended to the western plaza opposite the Dome of the Rock, as well as to the eastern section of the compound, which settlers have increasingly dominated since 2019.

The extended Jewish holiday season (2–24/10/2024) comprised four major religious observances. The first was the Hebrew New Year (*Rosh Hashanah*), which fell on Thursday and Friday, 3–4/10/2024. During the Thursday incursion, 483 settlers stormed *al-Aqsa* Mosque and blew the horn (*Shofar*) inside the compound for the fourth consecutive year.[60] Beginning with the Hebrew New Year (*Rosh Hashanah*) and concluding with the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), the Ten Days of Repentance (*Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*) were marked by settlers storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque while dressed in white robes (*kittel*), regarded in Jewish tradition as "garments of repentance." The *kittel* is also associated with the priestly class (*Kohanim*), whose symbolic presence Temple groups have increasingly sought to institutionalize within *al-Aqsa* Mosque.[61] The second observance in this season was the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), which fell on Saturday, 12/10/2024, during which no incursions took place. The third and most significant occasion was the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*), which extended from Thursday, 17/10/2024, to Wednesday, 23/10/2024. Over five days of incursions, excluding Friday and Saturday, 5,980 settlers stormed *al-Aqsa* Mosque, averaging 1,196 per day. For decades, Temple groups have sought to consolidate *Sukkot* as the principal season of incursions into *al-Aqsa* Mosque due to its multi-day duration.

During the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*), *al-Aqsa* Mosque witnessed renewed horn (*Shofar*) blowing, documented for the first time in a video released by Temple groups themselves.[62] This occured despite *Shofar* blowing not being part of the traditional ritual framework of *Sukkot*. In addition, the additional prayer associated with Sukkot was, for the first time since the occupation of the mosque, collectively performed in the eastern plaza of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.[63] Participants also brought in the Four Species (*Arba'ah Minim*), with related practices documented inside *al-Aqsa* for the fourth consecutive year,[64] since their initial recording in 2021. Stormers also entered the compound wearing white robes (*Kittel*),[65] despite the conclusion of the Ten Days of Repentance (*Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*), for which the garment is traditionally reserved, in an effort to symbolically reinforce the presence of the priestly class (*Kohanim*). Full-body prostration was performed collectively throughout the holiday period, alongside attempts to introduce it into

a new area of the compound not previously used for this ritual, namely the northern section near the Gate of Darkness.[66]

The season concluded with *Simchat Torah* on Thursday 24/10/2024, during which 334 settlers stormed *al-Aqsa* Mosque.[67] This day coincided with the anniversary of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, which occurred on the same morning the previous year. Despite the relatively limited number of settlers, Israeli police restricted access to *al-Aqsa* Mosque and assaulted and arrested a young Palestinian man[68] and a young woman[69] who managed to enter, reflecting a notably retaliatory posture in the handling of the day.

The performance of Jewish religious rituals inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque outside their designated religious timing remains a key indicator of how Temple groups and, more broadly, the Religious Zionist movement use ritual practice as a tool of control. The significance of these practices lies in their role in advancing the Judaization of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

The Festival of Lights (*Hanukkah*) (25–31/12/2024) saw 2,556 stormings of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, averaging 426 per day, a 60% increase compared to 2023. During this period, *Hanukkah* menorah was lit in the eastern courtyard of *al-Aqsa* for the third time in its history, following limited attempts in 2021 and 2023. This practice further consolidated the eastern plaza as a de facto, undeclared synagogue within *al-Aqsa* Mosque. It has become a recurring feature across all storming seasons in 2024 and was expected to continue into 2025.

In addition, on the first day of this escalation period, Thursday 26/12/2024, the *Hanukkah* dance (*Hora*), previously performed for years at the mosque's gates, was brought inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque for the first time, marking a rare precedent and, according to available documentation, possibly the first instance of this ritual being performed within the compound.[70] Furthermore, the Priestly Blessing (*Birkat Kohanim*) was also performed daily throughout this holiday period,[71] further consolidating its status as a potentially normalized ritual within *al-Aqsa*, alongside other practices that have already become routinized. These include the full-body prostration, performed daily since its endorsement by Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir on 13/8/2024, as well as *Shofar* blowing, morning and evening prayers, *Bar Mitzvah* ceremonies, and additional holiday prayers, all of which have gradually been normalized within *al-Aqsa* Mosque in recent years.

At the level of imposing religious symbols and ritual objects, a settler stormed *al-Aqsa* Mosque wearing *Tefillin* (black prayer phylacteries) for only the third time since Israel's occupation of the site. *Tefillin* are among the principal ritual items used in daily Jewish prayer, alongside the prayer shawl (*Tallit*), the ritual fringes (*Tzitzit*), and the Jewish prayer book (*Siddur*). Temple groups have repeatedly sought to introduce these items into *al-Aqsa* Mosque,[72] particularly after petitioning the Israeli Supreme Court in 2022 to permit their entry into the compound.[73]

The unilateral domination of the Old City at night was also repeated, particularly along the Cotton Merchants' Market route and in Ghazali Square near Lion's Gate. The menorah was lit in its near-complete form outside Cotton Merchants' Gate, in a ritual observed annually since 2017. Similarly, the menorah-lighting ceremony in the Western Wall Plaza, attended by Israeli ministers and rabbis, has continued almost uninterrupted since the occupation of Jerusalem.

Lighting the *Hanukkah* Menorah at Cotton Merchants' Gate, on the Night of 1/1/2025[74]

During the Festival of Lights (*Hanukkah*), Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir personally led the storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and took part in prayer recitations inside the compound.[75] This episode highlights how the Judaization of *al-Aqsa* and the institutionalisation of Jewish religious rituals within it have become embedded in official Israeli government policy, rather than remaining confined to fringe groups or activist organisations. In this context, Ben-Gvir has advanced the implementation of the eleven demands submitted to him by Temple groups upon taking office.[76]

b. Major Escalation Seasons 2025

The Jewish holiday *Purim* (13–16/3/2025)[77] witnessed a notable escalation at *al-Aqsa* Mosque. On the main day of the holiday, Sunday 16/3/2025, 555 Israeli settlers stormed the compound despite coinciding with the 16th of Ramadan. During the storming, settlers performed collective full-body prostration rituals in the eastern courtyard of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, while one group continuously chanted Torah passages throughout different areas of *al-Aqsa*. Some participants also used the holiday's costume tradition to storm the mosque dressed in the attire of the *Kohanim* priestly class, presenting these garments as a form of festive disguise.[78]

The Jewish Passover (*Pesach*) season (13–19/4/2025) was preceded by the imposition of a second layer of Israeli police checkpoints along the roads leading to *al-Aqsa* Mosque, including the routes to Bani Ghanim Gate, Iron Gate, Cotton Merchants' Gate and Chain Gate. All of these branch off from al-Wad Street, the main road running parallel to the mosque's western gates. These checkpoints remained in place permanently, marking a further consolidation of the security siege imposed on *al-Aqsa* Mosque.[79]

Over the course of this season, 6,768 Israeli settlers stormed *al-Aqsa* Mosque[80] across five days, averaging 1,354 settlers per day. This represented a 56% increase over the previous year and more than an eightfold increase compared to 2015, when only 780 settlers stormed *al-Aqsa* Mosque during the same holiday season.[81]

The Jewish Passover (*Pesach*) season also saw intensified assaults on *al-Aqsa* Mosque, including repeated instances of collective full-body prostration, one of

which involved Israeli Knesset member (MK) Zvi Sukkot.[82] The period further featured collective chanting and musical prayers in the eastern courtyard[83] and other parts of *al-Aqsa* Mosque,[84] alongside storming of the mosque by settlers dressed in garments associated with the priestly class (*Kohanim*).[85] During the same period, settlers extended their ritual presence beyond *al-Aqsa* Mosque, turning Ghazali Square near Lion's Gate,[86] the Cotton Merchants' Market leading to the Cotton Merchants' Gate,[87] and the Mercy Gate Cemetery to the east[88] into spaces for prayer, singing, and dancing throughout the holiday. These developments ran in parallel with continued activity at the Western Wall Plaza, reflecting a broader expansion of Jewish ritual practice into the northern, western and eastern peripheries of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Commenting on these developments, Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir stated, "What wasn't done for 30 years is being done on my watch, and I'm happy to have the honor, by the grace of God, to lead this huge change."[89]

The Hebrew anniversary marking the completion of Jerusalem's occupation (26/5/2025): referred to in Israel as Jerusalem Day (*Yom Yerushalayim*). Ahead of the storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, Israeli police introduced new measures raising the number of settler groups permitted to be present simultaneously inside the compound to six.[90] This followed an earlier decision on 13/8/2024 to increase the number from one group to three, with each group capped at 200 settlers, as previously noted. As a result, the number of settlers allowed inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque under Israeli police protection rose from 150 before 13/8/2024, to 600 thereafter, and then to 1,200 beginning on this date. These successive increases, implemented in coordination with the mobilization efforts of Temple groups, demonstrate that altering the status quo at *al-Aqsa* Mosque is fundamentally a state policy. Rather than independently driving these changes, Temple groups have served as instruments through which the Israeli government has advanced and institutionalized.

Israeli police Instructions Issued to Temple Groups on 22/5/2025 ahead of the Storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque Marking the Hebrew Anniversary of Jerusalem's Occupation

- שמור -

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מרחב דוד

הנדון: הנחיות למבקרים ולעולים להר הבית לשמירת כללי מנהג המקום ביום ירושלים 2025

1. כחלק מהיערכות משטרת ישראל לביקורים בהר הבית במהלך יום ירושלים, מרחב דוד נערך בכוחות מתוגברים לאבטחת עולי חרגל ושמירה על הסדר הציבורי.
2. לאור צמי ריבוי עולי הרגל והמבקרים, המשטרה תערך לכניסת קבוצות כל 10 דקות לערך, ועד 6 קבוצות במקביל והכל בכפוף למנועת הקבוצות בשטח הר הבית.
3. מבקש להישמע להוראות המשטרה, לזמני וסדרי הביקורים בהר וזאת על מנת ולאפשר לכלל המבקרים לעלות להר בנחת ובבטחה.
4. מרחב דוד נערך על מנת ולאפשר העלייה להר תוך כוונה להנעים את חווית הביקור, יש להישמע להוראות המשטרה והנחיות השוטרים.
5. קבוצות המעוניינות להתארגן לביקור, יש לתאם מראש עם יחידת תימ"ק.
6. בברכת יום ירושלים שמח.

בברכה,

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מפקד מרחב דוד

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That day witnessed the storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque by 2,092 Israeli settlers, a 31% increase compared to the previous year.[91] The event was personally overseen by National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir,[92] who deliberately participated in Jewish religious rituals inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque.[93] Speaking to the press, he stated, "There are really a lot of Jews who flood the Temple Mount. It's so wonderful to see. Today, it is already possible, thank God, to pray on the Temple Mount, to bow down on the Temple Mount. We thank the Holy One, blessed be He, for this, and we will continue, continue, continue."[94]

He was joined in the storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque by Minister of the Negev, the Galilee and National Resilience MK Yitzhak Wasserlauf, and MK Yitzhak Kreuzer. For the first time since the onset of settler storming in 2003, the compound also witnessed small-scale mobile flag marches across its various sections,[95] including participation by MK Zvi Sukkot.[96] The day further saw repeated public collective rituals resembling group chanting in the eastern section of *al-Aqsa* Mosque,[97] in which MK Amit Halevi also took part.[98] Halevi had previously submitted a bill on 7/6/2023 proposing the spatial division of *al-Aqsa* Mosque between Jews and Muslims.[99]

Temple Destruction (*Tisha B'Av*) (3/8/2025), marked the largest storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque since its occupation to date. On that day, 3,969 settlers stormed the compound, about 4 thousand according to the figures of the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf, marking a 32% increase compared to the same occasion in the previous year, which had recorded 3 thousand stormers and had itself been the highest figure at the time. Earlier records for this occasion stood at 2,200 settlers in both 2022 and 2023.[100] This escalation reflects a trajectory pursued by Temple groups since 2017, aimed at transforming *Tisha B'Av* from a day of mourning into a performative moment of renewed commitment to the reconstruction of the Temple, with record-breaking storming figures.

The Israeli police preceded the storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque by reaffirming the expanded entry arrangements adopted on 22/5/2025. These provisions allowed for the simultaneous entry of six groups of stormers, each capped at 200 settlers, with a new group admitted every ten minutes. This system reflects a deliberate effort to institutionalize a sustained and enlarged settler presence inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque. As has become standard practice during major storms in recent years, the National Security Minister personally oversaw this event,[101] including leading prayers for one of the settler groups in the eastern courtyard.[102] He was joined by fellow minister Yitzhak Wasserlauf, as well as three MKs: Sharren Haskel, who serves in an honorary capacity as deputy foreign minister; Amit Halevi, known for advancing proposals to spatially partition *al-Aqsa* Mosque; and Osher Shekalim, a prominent figure in the movement advocating the restoration of settlement activity in GS.

Itamar Ben-Gvir took part in the storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque from multiple directions. He first joined a Haredi prayer at Cotton Merchants' Gate, as this group refrains from entering *al-Aqsa* Mosque in line with a rabbinical ruling that temporarily prohibits such access. He then entered *al-Aqsa* with supporters from the Religious Zionist camp, before proceeding to the Western Wall Plaza, where he participated in Jewish religious rituals. Other political figures also participated in various forms of provocation. Osher Shekalim performed full-body prostration, while Amit Halevi displayed Israeli flags in front of the Dome of the Rock.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu reiterated his standard post-incursion statement that "Israel's policy of maintaining the status quo on the Temple Mount has not changed and will not change."[103] The formulation serves, on the one hand, to reassure Arab official actors, and on the other, to deploy the term in a deliberately ambiguous manner, whereby each act of escalation is effectively absorbed into the very "status quo" it purports to preserve.

This assault also marked a further qualitative shift, as it was the first major occasion following the decision by Itamar Ben-Gvir instructing Israeli police to facilitate and endorse settlers' dancing and singing inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque. On 3/8/2025, the storming of *al-Aqsa* witnessed an unprecedented convergence of ritual performance, including chanting, singing, applause, shouting and mass dancing circles.[104] Within *al-Aqsa* Mosque, participants performed collective full-body prostrations, the Priestly Blessing (*Birkat Kohanim*), recitations of the Book of Lamentations (*Eicha*), and the biblical morning and evening prayers. The storm began with a collective *Shema* prayer on the roof of al-Marwani Mosque, underscoring a further deepening of the ritualisation of the space.[105]

Taking advantage of their large numbers and the exceptional facilitation provided by Israeli police, the intruders stormed *al-Aqsa* Mosque and moved between its eastern courtyard, the western courtyard facing the Dome of the Rock plaza, and its various gates, which settlers have repeatedly violated, carrying out near-continuous ritual performances throughout the day.[106] They also continued to expand the introduction of Jewish ritual objects. For the fourth time, they brought in *Tefillin*,[107] alongside items that have become increasingly routine in *al-Aqsa*, including prayer caps (*Kippah*), prayer shawls (*Tallit*), and the ritual

fringes (*Tzitzit*). They further carried Torah scrolls and circled with them outside the Moroccan Gate,[108] signaling a growing push toward normalizing Torah reading inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque. In parallel, Temple groups are expected to intensify efforts before Israeli courts to authorize these practices, paving the way for their further institutionalization within *al-Aqsa*.

The extended Jewish holiday season (23/9–14/10/2025) began with the Hebrew New Year (*Rosh Hashanah*), which fell on 23–24/9/2025, during which 897 settlers stormed *al-Aqsa* Mosque. The most notable development was the consolidation of collective settler dancing and singing inside the compound, marking the second major escalation season aimed at institutionalizing these practices as imposed realities within *al-Aqsa*. The storming also featured settlers wearing white robes (*Kittel*), intended to underscore the presence of the Priestly class (*Kohanim*) at the site.[109] In addition, the horn (*Shofar*) was blown for the fifth consecutive year and with greater frequency than in previous years, reportedly reaching seven instances according to Temple group sources.[110] Several incidents were audiovisually documented, although worshippers, journalists and *al-Aqsa* guards were unable to detect them at the time. The acts only became publicly known after settlers themselves showcased them following the conclusion of their fasting period. These developments reflected the intensified blackout and restrictions imposed on *al-Aqsa* during the holiday season. Palestinian media platforms were forced to document the storming remotely from the Mount of Olives using high-zoom cameras capable of capturing only limited footage of the incursions,[111] a condition that persisted throughout the entire escalation season.

The second observance in this season was the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), which fell on 2/10/2025. Given the holiday's strict fasting rules, which prohibit travel and transportation, settlers customarily precede it with what they term a "compensatory storming" of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Accordingly, on 1/10/2025, about 600 settlers took part in such a storming.[112] *Yom Kippur* itself witnessed the blowing of the horn (*Shofar*) inside the synagogue established within the Tankaziyya School, part of which overlooks the western arcade of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. This ritual has now been performed for the fifth consecutive year. The notable development in 2025, however, was the circulation of video footage showing that those celebrating in the synagogue and blowing the *Shofar* were Israeli soldiers in full military uniform.[113]

The third and most significant occasion was the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*), which extended seven days, 7–13/10/2025, including five storming days, as such activities cease on Fridays and Saturdays. During this escalation, 7,119 settlers stormed *al-Aqsa* Mosque,[114] averaging 1,424 per storming day, marking a 5% increase over the previous year. If this trend stabilizes at its current level, it may suggest that Temple groups are approaching the limits of their mobilization capacity, despite receiving full institutional support and despite the coincidence of *Sukkot* with the announcement of a ceasefire in GS after two years of war. The broader pattern of stormings, together with the apparent ceiling in daily and seasonal participation, points to the limited demographic base of this current, whose influence continues to derive largely from the backing it receives from the Israeli government and state institutions. The holiday period also witnessed multiple episodes of collective dancing in the eastern courtyard of *al-Aqsa* Mosque,[115] at times involving hundreds of settlers.[116]

Bringing the Four Kinds (*Arba'ah Minim*) into *al-Aqsa* Mosque has become a central objective of Temple groups during *Sukkot*, as the ritual symbolically invokes the notion of the "Divine Presence (*Shekhinah*) dwelling in the Temple" while reinforcing the claim that *al-Aqsa* Mosque itself is the site of the alleged Temple. Attempts to smuggle the Four Kinds into the mosque began in 2013 and were documented consistently from 2018 onward, continuing annually except in 2020. The major shift came in 2025, when settlers openly and collectively performed the ritual multiple times while storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque under the observation of Israeli police and without interference.[117] This marked a significant departure from the previous status quo, under which Jewish religious rituals and their associated ritual objects were formally prohibited inside the mosque compound.

The fourth and final occasion in this extended season is *Simchat Torah*, which saw another storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque by Ben-Gvir. This marked his thirteenth storming since taking office and his tenth since the onset of the GS war up to that point.[118]

The extended Jewish holiday season also witnessed the first-ever formal distress appeal issued by the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf on 13/10/2025, addressed to King 'Abdullah II of Jordan. The statement read:

> The Islamic Awqaf, Affairs and Holy Sites Council – Jerusalem issues an urgent distress call to His Majesty King ‘Abdullah II ibn al-Hussein, the Hashemite Custodian of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, urging leaders of the Muslim world and the international community more than ever before to exert pressure on the Israeli occupation authorities to halt the most severe dismantling of the existing religious and legal status quo witnessed in the history of *al-Aqsa* Mosque/ al-Haram al-Qudsi al-Sharif, particularly during the year 2025 CE.[119]

The Festival of Lights (*Hanukkah*) (14–22/12/2025): lasted eight days, including six days of storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque. During this period, 2,835 intruders stormed the compound, averaging 472 per storming day,[120] an 11% increase compared to the previous season, further consolidating this holiday cycle as one of the principal periods of intensified pressure on *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

Israeli police again leveraged the scale of storming during this season to impose new de facto arrangements. The Cotton Merchants’ Gate was closed to Muslim worshippers throughout the holiday during *Maghrib* and *Isha’* prayers, further privileging settler access over that of worshippers in the mosque and its surrounding area. At the same time, Temple groups convened the Light for the Temple conference, on 17/12/2025 at the International Convention Center (Nation’s Building) in Jerusalem,[121] reflecting their continued efforts to position the Temple agenda at the centre of Israeli public discourse.

From a ritual perspective, symbolic candles were lit, symbolizing the ritual lighting of the menorah, alongside a collective enactment of full-body prostration. This marked the third holiday season in which singing and dancing circles have been held inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque since its occupation. Throughout the festival period, efforts also continued to introduce biblical ritual objects and symbols into the compound, including the raising of the so-called Temple flag inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

In the vicinity of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the menorah was lit daily throughout the nights of the holiday season outside Cotton Merchants’ Gate. A dinner gathering was held in front of it on Wednesday, 17/12/2025, for the first time in the history of these ritual practices around *al-Aqsa*. This was followed on Thursday, 18/12/2025, by a procession around *al-Aqsa* Mosque’s gates, accompanied by the display of the

Temple flag, the lighting of the menorah, the blowing of the *Shofar*, and singing and dancing in Ghazali Square outside Lion's Gate to the north.[122] Since 2017, Temple groups have increasingly sought to designate this square as a central site for festival celebrations.

c. Analysis of the Major Escalation Seasons in *al-Aqsa* Mosque 2024–2025

The shift in the scale and character of the storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, whether in terms of numbers, the ritual practices performed, the associated collective celebrations, or the introduction of biblical ritual objects during the two years of the GS war, constitutes the most significant quantitative and qualitative escalation the mosque has witnessed in the two decades since the opening of daily incursions in 2003. More consequential, however, was the parallel transformation in the regulatory and security regime imposed by Israeli police. During the war, new layers of checkpoints were established around *al-Aqsa*, while existing checkpoints were reinforced with iron enclosures. Inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque, police foot patrols were introduced during prayer times, exceeding nine deployments per day. Surveillance was also extended to sermons delivered from *al-Aqsa* Mosque's pulpit, prayers in its mihrab, and broader religious instruction and activities, including repeated attempts to restrict lessons and cancel events held within the compound. At the same time, access for settlers was significantly facilitated, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of settlers storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque at any given time, from about 150 before the GS war to around 1,200 thereafter.

In practice, this increase in the number of settlers storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque (11% in 2024 and 22% in 2025) would not have been achievable without the extensive facilitation measures granted to them, alongside the intensified siege imposed on *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the tightening restrictions around it, and policies aimed at excluding Muslims and progressively eroding sustained forms of presence and steadfastness. Indeed, it can be argued that the facilitation provided by Israeli police to Temple groups continues to exceed their actual mobilization capacity by nearly a twofold margin. Under police regulations allowing entry in groups every ten minutes, with a ceiling of 200 settlers per group and an extension of the storming window to six and a half hours, the system effectively enables up to 39 groups per day, amounting to a theoretical maximum of about 7,800 stormers. In practice, however, the recorded peak remained significantly lower, reaching 4 thousand stormers on 3/8/2025.

This conclusion is further supported by a quantitative review of the annual aggregate of storming incidents. Assuming an average of 230 storming days per year, the daily averages are as follows:

Table 4/3: Average Daily Number of Settlers Storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque 2024–2025

Source	2024	2025
Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf	233	284
Temple Groups	262	319

Taken together, these figures underscore a structural shift: *al-Aqsa* Mosque has moved from a pre-2003 baseline of zero daily settler stormings to an average of 284–319 stormers per day in the current period, with peaks reaching up to 4 thousand during major religious holidays. At the same time, any numerical interpretation of this trend must be situated within a parallel spatial reality of the compound. The average number of stormers remains only marginally comparable to Muslim worshipper presence during even the least attended prayers. A single row in the al-Qibli Mosque accommodates about 80–100 worshippers, and it is uncommon for fewer than four rows to be present. Accordingly, even low-attendance prayers regularly match or exceed the daily average of stormers. Given that the al-Qibli Mosque has a capacity of about 5,300–5,500 worshippers, a fully attended prayer in the mosque alone produces a Muslim worshipper presence that surpasses even the record number of stormers recorded during the largest incursions.

What converts this apparent numerical limitation into a condition of effective dominance is the role of the Israeli police, through policies that impose a sustained siege on the mosque and the systematic removal of worshippers. This includes restricting access even for those who manage to enter *al-Aqsa* Mosque during storming periods, and preventing them from remaining in the vicinity of the stormers. It further entails facilitating settler exclusivity over *al-Aqsa* Mosque during storming hours, to the extent that it is effectively rendered available for Jewish religious rituals, chanting and dancing. The key point that should not be overlooked is that the political and institutional backing provided by the Israeli government, together with its security and military forces, to Temple groups, and its adoption of their objectives, constitutes a far more decisive and far-reaching

factor than anything these groups could achieve through their own organizational capacity or limited base of supporters.

At the same time, everything that has been imposed at *al-Aqsa* Mosque in terms of storming, ritual performance, singing, chanting and public celebration remains contingent on the continued dominance of Israeli police over the site and its capacity to consistently sustain and protect this imposed presence. This leads to two key implications. First, these developments remain, for now, within the realm of provisional realities. They have not yet translated into a structural transformation of the mosque's gates or physical fabric, although their persistence keeps open the possibility of such an outcome over time. Second, challenging the authority and control of Israeli police over *al-Aqsa* Mosque constitutes the decisive avenue for halting this trajectory of domination and potentially reversing it. This returns the analysis to a recurring historical pattern evident across successive uprisings and waves of mobilization: sustained presence and mobilization (*ribat*) has functioned as the primary mechanism for constraining the expansion of Judaization at the site, while resistance in its various forms has been instrumental in pushing it back. Furthermore, repeated uprisings, sustained mobilization and continuous presence have all contributed to slowing the consolidation of control over *al-Aqsa* Mosque, preventing it from reaching its intended end state, and at times producing tangible reversals, as seen in the removal of the electronic gates, the restoration of Mercy Gate, and the resumption of the spiritual retreat (*I'tikaf*) practices.

In light of the role Israel seeks to assign to the genocide in GS as a moment intended to suppress the Palestinian spirit, erode any remaining will for resistance in Palestine and across the region, and position it as a gateway to a final settlement, there has been a parallel effort to extend this logic to *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Yet, to date, this project has advanced primarily through gradual, incremental steps rather than decisive measures that would fully operationalize the assumption that mass violence can produce strategic resolution. From this perspective, *al-Aqsa* Mosque stands at a critical juncture in the history of its occupation. Either its custodians and *Murabitun* will succeed in reasserting forms of resistance capable of generating reversals, drawing on the symbolic and mobilizing force of the sacred as a source of renewed agency, or the occupying power may come to judge that conditions are sufficiently permissive to move toward more decisive interventions, initiating structural transformations within *al-Aqsa* Mosque itself.

3. Constructions Beneath *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Vicinity

a. Constructions in Its Vicinity

In 2007, a centralized master plan was introduced to consolidate a series of Judaization projects around *al-Aqsa* Mosque under the label "Old Jerusalem." Since then, several projects have developed along two main trajectories:

First: The establishment of major Jewish religious and cultural institutions in the vicinity of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, including the Temple Institute's headquarters, the Burnt House Museum, and the Strauss House project. These sites are already completed, operational, and open to visitors. Efforts are currently underway to reinforce this institutional cluster through the construction of *Beit HaLiba* (Core House) to the west of the Western Wall Plaza, as well as the Kedem Complex to the south, the largest of the planned projects.

Second: The restoration and activation of "historical synagogues" associated with early waves of Religious Zionist settlement in Jerusalem during the second half of the 19th century. This process began with the Isaac's Tent (*Ohel Yitzhak*) Synagogue, located above the Hammam al-Ain endowment, which was opened in 2009. It was followed by the Hurva Synagogue, situated above the waqf of the Great Omari Mosque and opened in 2010. The most prominent and largest of these is the *Tiferet Yisrael* (Glory of Israel) Synagogue.

These large-scale projects have advanced at a pace that falls short of the ambitions driving efforts to reshape the city's identity. Although this development surge began nearly two decades ago, its key components have progressed unevenly. The Kedem Complex, located south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, remains in the archeological excavation phase that precedes foundation laying.[123] By contrast, the *Beit HaLiba* (Core House) project and the *Tiferet Yisrael* (Glory of Israel) Synagogue have only recently begun to move forward after decades of delay and stagnation.

***Beit HaLiba* (Core House) project**

It is situated at the far western edge of the Western Wall Plaza. Its planners circumvented archaeological constraints by constructing it on metal pillars anchored above the bedrock of the excavations. The project was completed and inaugurated in 2023.[124]

The *Beit HaLiba* (Core House) on the Western Side of the Western Wall Plaza Following its Inauguration in 2023
(with its steel foundations visible above the underlying archaeological remains)

***Tiferet Yisrael* (Glory of Israel) Synagogue**

The project was undertaken by the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter, one of the principal Judaization bodies affiliated with Jerusalem Municipality. Preparatory archaeological excavations began in 2012, and the project faced repeated objections due to the building's height, which exceeds ten meters. Situated on elevated ground in the Sharaf neighborhood, it is poised to become one of the most prominent structures on Jerusalem's skyline. Although foundation-laying ceremonies were held on several occasions, actual construction did not commence until 2022 and was completed in June 2025. Disputes subsequently emerged over its intended function: ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) groups sought to convert it into a synagogue under their control, while the Israeli government decided on 25/6/2025 to designate it as a public community-benefit center open to a variety of activities rather than prayer alone, placing it under the administration of the company that developed it.[125] Nevertheless, the project had not been officially inaugurated at the time of writing.

The *Tiferet Yisrael* (Glory of Israel) Synagogue in Jerusalem's Sharaf Quarter After Its Completion in June 2026

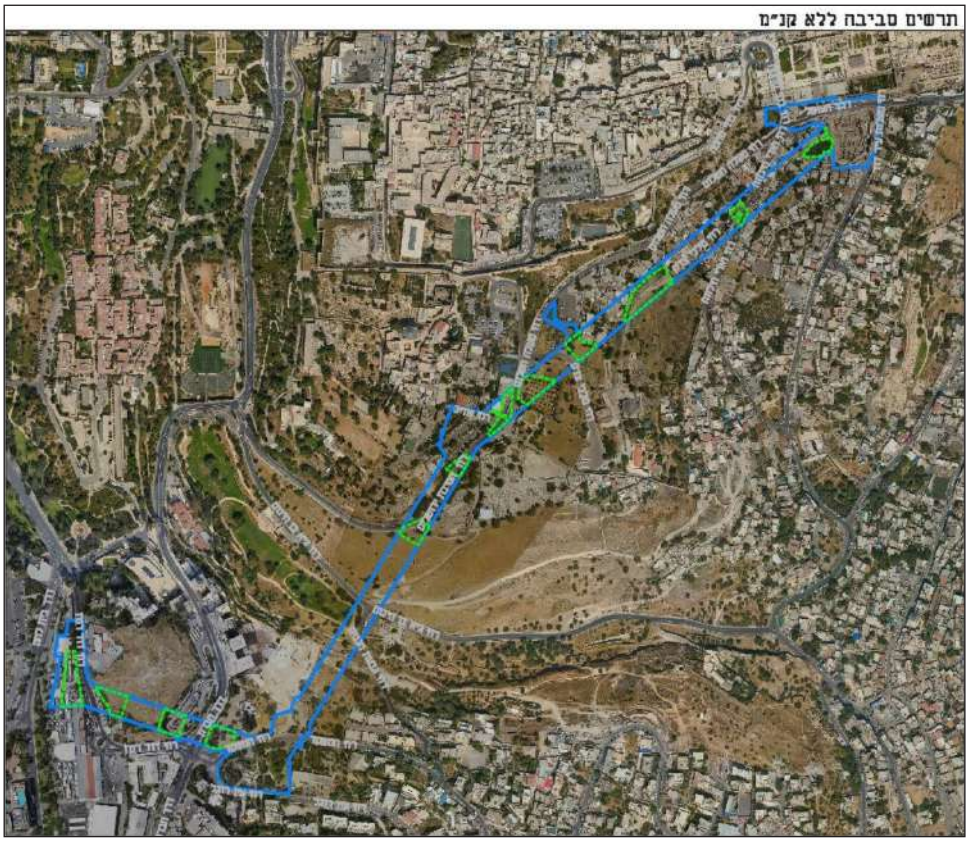
As Israel sought to consolidate these Judaization efforts through infrastructure projects aimed at reshaping the city's physical and symbolic landscape, these initiatives developed unevenly. The "Trump Station" high-speed rail project near the Western Wall Plaza in the Old City, first announced in 2017, was eventually cancelled and later appeared to have been largely symbolic, intended to accommodate US President Donald Trump during his first term. It was formally removed from the final rail plans submitted in 2023.[126] Other projects, however, continued to advance, particularly the Cable Car Project around the Old City. At the same time, a new proposal was introduced to establish an Israeli police centre near the Iron Gate, northwest of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

Developments in the Old City Cable Car Project

The cable car project around the Old City has received sustained backing, particularly since 2019. On 29/6/2022, the Jerusalem Municipality and the Ministry of Transport and Road Safety launched the tendering and contracting process, which was completed on 2/5/2023.[127] The municipality subsequently initiated land expropriation measures to secure sites for the project's stations and the pillars intended to support the planned cable car route to the Old City. On 9/12/2023,

the municipality announced extensive land expropriations in Wadi al-Rababa and Wadi Hilweh in support of the project. Some of these expropriations involve key roads and transportation junctions constructed primarily on land owned by Jerusalemite Palestinians.[128]

Map 2/3: Locations of Land Expropriations for the Cable Car Project in Silwan



Police Station Building Plan Near Iron Gate

On 4/11/2024, the Israeli police announced plans to construct a new station in the Old City near Iron Gate, one of the western gates of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. The site is linked to al-Wad Street, the main artery running parallel to the mosque's western entrances. It would be added to an existing nearby Israeli community police center at Beit Hanina,[129] alongside another station opposite Chain Gate and a heavily armed Border Police post at Remission Gate, further consolidating policing

control over *al-Aqsa* Mosque, which is widely viewed as the most consequential instrument in its Judaization.

The plan was submitted for preliminary approval to the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee on 8/10/2024, with a 15-day period for objections. Several appeals were filed and were still under review as of August 2025,[130] with approval and implementation widely expected. The proposed facility would be built on a 440 m² plot confiscated by military order from the families of al-Mu'aqqat, al-Tarhi, and Abu Mayyaleh. It is designed as a three-story structure with a total built-up area exceeding one thousand square meters.[131]

Map 3/3: Location of the Planned Police Station Near Iron Gate

Ezrat Israel Egalitarian Plaza at the Western Wall, potentially placing *al-Aqsa* Mosque Under the Authority of the Official Rabbinate

The Ezrat Israel egalitarian prayer platform at the Western Wall Plaza emerged from demands by Reform and feminist religious currents to allow women to engage in full prayer practices, aloud with Torah scrolls, and while wearing ritual garments such as prayer shawls (*Tallit*) and prayer caps (*Kippah*), on equal footing

with men in the open space of the Western Wall Plaza. These demands have been categorically rejected by the official Ashkenazi and Sephardi rabbinate, which regards them as a fundamental breach of established Jewish liturgical norms that reserve congregational prayer for adult men and prohibit women from handling Torah scrolls or wearing core ritual attire. Support for the so-called "upper prayer space" (Ezrat Israel egalitarian plaza) has nonetheless developed, envisaging a site near the level of the Moroccan Gate in the walls of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, with capacity for about 900 worshippers. The proposal has since become a point of sustained religious and legal contention within Israel.[132]

Ezrat Israel Egalitarian Plaza South of Moroccan Hill

Traditional religious factions have also pursued legislative action in the Knesset to amend the Protection of Holy Places Law (1967), enacted after the occupation of Jerusalem in 1967. The law affirms "the freedom of access of the members of the different religions to the places sacred to them" and that "the Holy Places shall be protected from desecration,"[133] but leaves the terms "religions," "holy places" and "desecration" undefined, reflecting its intentionally broad drafting and the wide discretion it grants the Israeli authorities. Exploiting this ambiguity, these factions have proposed designating the official rabbinate as the sole authority empowered to define "desecration" in Jewish holy sites, without clearly delimiting those sites themselves. This would effectively settle internal disputes in favour of traditionalist positions over reform and feminist movements,

extend rabbinical oversight to the Ezrat Israel egalitarian plaza, and, on the basis of a prior Supreme Court ruling that classified *al-Aqsa* Mosque as a "Jewish holy site" falling within the scope of the law, potentially expand such authority to *al-Aqsa* itself.[134] Despite reservations within Temple groups, Itamar Ben-Gvir and his party have endorsed the amendment, framing it as an opportunity to place *al-Aqsa* under rabbinical authority by leveraging the law's ambiguity. In practical terms, this could enable far-reaching restrictions on activities within the compound, including educational activities, children's recreation, and Muslim religious practices such as iftars, all of which could be construed as "desecration."[135] In this reading, Ben-Gvir saw that the initiative would significantly curtail the role of the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf and consolidate rabbinical control over *al-Aqsa* Mosque, in effect, on a final and irreversible basis.

b. Excavations

Archaeological excavations in the period covered by this report are concentrated in two main axes surrounding *al-Aqsa* Mosque: the western and southern flanks, with multiple excavation sites active in each. These excavations continue to serve two principal objectives: first, the recovery of artefacts that can be correlated with the biblical narrative; and second, the integration of tunnel networks and their development into a comprehensive underground archaeological–touristic complex designed to present that narrative. The most prominent excavations on the western side include the Western Wall tunnel network and the Robinson's Arch excavations, where recurring discoveries are regularly announced. On the southern side, key active sites include the Davidson Center excavations and adjacent work in the Umayyad palaces, followed further south by the Givati Parking Lot excavation, above which the Kedem Complex is planned. The most active effort aimed at completing an integrated tunnel system is the long subterranean passage being excavated under the name Pilgrims' Way or Pilgrimage Road.

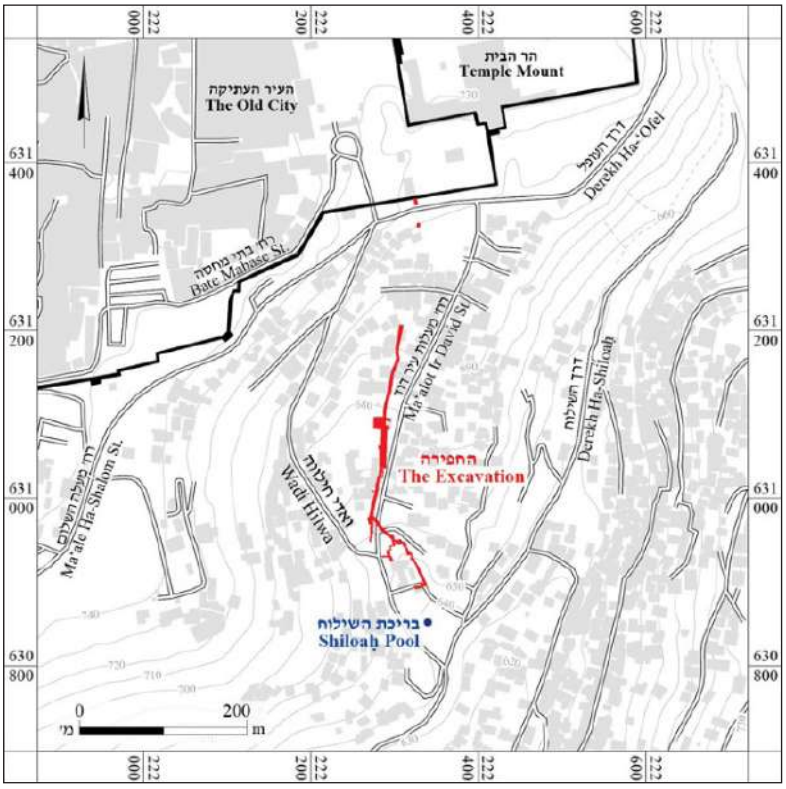
Pilgrims' Way Excavations

The project seeks to link the Silwan Pool, located south of the Wadi Hilweh neighborhood, with excavation sites surrounding *al-Aqsa* Mosque from the southwestern axis, at an aerial distance of roughly 600 meters. Excavations began in 2013 as a joint initiative between the Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA) and the Ir David Foundation (Elad), which promotes the establishment of the "City of

David" in the area of Wadi Hilweh. The Israeli government allocated 22 million shekels (about $6.8 million), while Elad contributed 28 million shekels (about $8.75 million), bringing total funding for tunneling and related works to about $15.5 million by 2023.[136]

Excavation work on the tunnel has continued since 2013 at a depth of about 3–4 metres underground. The project has caused structural cracks and collapses in several homes in the Wadi Hilweh neighborhood, forcing some residents to abandon their houses.[137] On 29/6/2019, part of the tunnel was inaugurated in the presence of David Friedman, then US ambassador to Israel, and Jason Greenblatt, President Donald Trump's envoy for the peace process.[138] Another section was inaugurated on 15/9/2025 with the participation of Secretary of State Marco Rubio, serving during Trump's second administration, alongside Mike Huckabee, the US ambassador to Israel and a leading figure within Christian Zionism.[139]

Map 4/3: Excavated Sections of the Pilgrimage Road Between the Silwan Pool and *al-Aqsa* Mosque's Southwestern Wall



Second: Jerusalem's Islamic Holy Sites

Al-Aqsa Mosque remains a central focus of the Israeli right and the Temple groups, alongside the Silwan area, where excavations and Judaization projects have intensified. The targeting, however, also extends to Islamic endowments and several mosques in Jerusalem's Old City, as well as to the city's cemeteries. These policies are rooted in the same settler-colonial replacement logic that seeks to establish Jewish holy sites at the expense of Islamic holy sites, and at times directly over them and across their entire area, as in the case of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

During the period covered by this report, numerous assaults on Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem were documented. The most notable included attempts to expand the area confiscated for settlers in Ribat al-Kurd, the Judaization of Mamilla Pool, a central remaining section of the historic Mamilla Cemetery west of the Old City, and the demolition of mosques in Jerusalem.

1. Ribat al-Kurd (Hosh al-Shihabi), referred to by Israel as the "Little Wailing Wall"

This Mamluk-era structure was originally established to host worshippers and *Murabitun* arriving in Jerusalem from distant regions. It is located adjacent to Iron Gate, one of *al-Aqsa* Mosque's western gates. Over time, settlers seized parts of the site and renamed it the "Little Wailing Wall," claiming that some of the worship chambers and main hall directly adjoin *al-Aqsa* Mosque's Western Wall, making it a northern extension of the Western Wall.

On 6/5/2025, Israeli police raided the site under direct orders from Netanyahu. They removed a waste container used by residents, along with soil barriers and an iron gate installed by the Jerusalem Islamic Awqaf to block access to the Western Wall tunnels. The area was subsequently allocated for settler prayer and use, while renovation works were undertaken to facilitate this transformation, further expanding the section of Ribat al-Kurd under settler control.[140]

2. Mamilla Pool

The Israeli municipality views the Mamilla Cemetery as a historical archive of Jerusalem, reflected in burial layers dating back to the Roman era. It has therefore sought to erase this record, which contains no Jewish burials, while simultaneously

treating the site as a valuable real-estate reserve in the heart of the city, to be gradually appropriated and redeveloped.

The cemetery's central area originally covered 208 thousand square metres (208 dunams), but has been steadily reduced through successive projects:[141]

- **After 1948:** Construction of two roads through the cemetery.
- **1959:** Establishment of Independence Park over 52 dunams of cemetery land.
- **1967:** Construction of a multi-storey municipal parking facility on the cemetery's north-western section.
- **After 1967:** Expansion of the commercial zone adjoining the parking facility.
- **1968:** Construction of the Leonardo Plaza Hotel on the cemetery's south-western side.
- **2015:** Establishment of cafés linking the parking area to the hotel along the cemetery's western edge.
- **2019:** Construction of the Center for Human Dignity—Museum of Tolerance (MOT) on 8 thousand square metres of cemetery land.

In sum, these projects have encroached upon 166 dunams of the cemetery's original area, leaving only its eastern section intact at about 42 dunams. Following its designation as an Israeli "heritage site" on 25/5/2025, and the announcement of a restoration project during a joint visit by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Jerusalem mayor Moshe Lion, Israeli authorities have also taken control of an additional six dunams corresponding to the pool itself. The planned "rehabilitation" of the site is expected to entail further encroachment on its surroundings, reducing the remaining cemetery area to under 36 dunams, around 17% of its original size.[142]

Mamilla Pool was originally part of Jerusalem's freshwater system and is linked to the Patriarch's Pool in the Old City. Both were supplied by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent's Pools in Artas, Bethlehem, as part of a broader system designed to provide water to Jerusalem. The pool measures 100 m long, 60 m wide and 6 m deep, with a capacity of about 36 thousand cubic meters.[143]

Recent Photo of Mamilla Pool, Designated for Rehabilitation as an Israeli Heritage Site

3. Demolition of Mosques

On 19/11/2024, the Shayyah Mosque in Jabal al-Mukaber, Jerusalem, was demolished. The mosque, built in 2004, covered 50 m^2. On 14/12/2024, Israeli municipal teams posted a demolition order on the door of the Al-Isra' Mosque in Silwan's Wadi Yasul neighbourhood. Built in 2002 and covering 150 m^2, it joined the Al-Qa'qa' Mosque in Abu Tayeh neighborhood in Ain al-Lawzeh–Silwan, which has been under demolition threat since 2014.[144]

Al-Rahman Mosque in Beit Safafa had already received, on 16/12/2021, an order to demolish its golden dome, which had been renovated during restoration and expansion works four years earlier. Following complaints from adjacent settlers, residents were compelled in March 2023 to lower the dome's structure and alter its colour.[145]

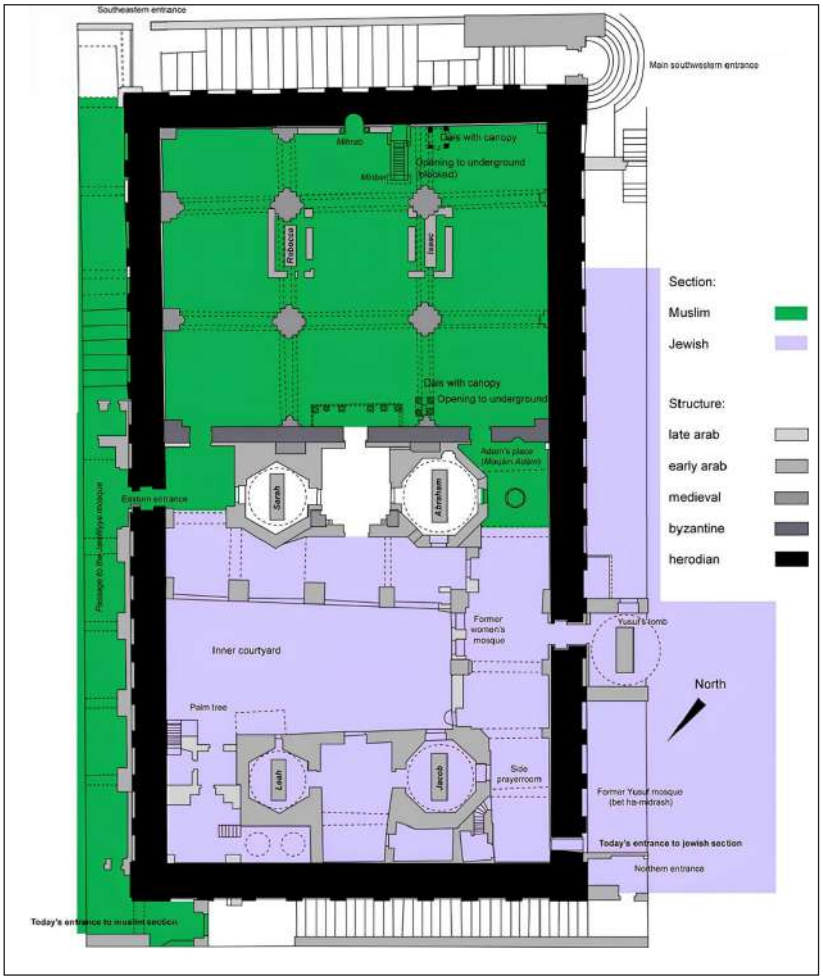
Third: Islamic Holy Sites in the Rest of Palestine

1. Ibrahimi Mosque

The Ibrahimi Mosque, including its adjoining structures, covers an area of 2,480 m².[146] Since 1976, Israeli authorities began gradually confiscating parts of it. Following the 1994 Ibrahimi Mosque massacre and in line with the recommendations of the Israeli Shamgar Commission,[147] the authorities allocated the al-'Anbar section and the mosque courtyard, including the cenotaphs of Abraham and Jacob, as well as the western and northwestern entrances, to Jewish settlers. They also designated the covered arcades of the mosque, known as the "Isaac Hall," along with "Adam's Chamber" west of the cenotaph of Abraham and its eastern entrance, in addition to the Jawali Mosque, for Muslim worship. According to precise mapping using Google Earth, the area allocated to Muslims amounts to 862 m² of the original mosque, plus 307 m² for the Jawali Mosque, totaling 1,169 m², about 47% of the mosque and its annexes. The remaining 1,311 m², or about 53%, has been allocated to Jewish settlers.

Aerial view of the Ibrahimi Mosque, showing al-'Anbar to the right and al-Jawali Mosque to the left.

Spatial Division of the Ibrahimi Mosque Imposed by Israel under the Shamgar Commission Recommendations



Moreover, time-sharing arrangements have been introduced whereby the Hebron Awqaf Directorate cedes full control of the mosque to Jews for ten days of their religious holidays each year, while Jews, in turn, grant Muslims access to the courtyard and the main prayer hall for ten days annually.[148] These include the two days of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, the four Fridays of Ramadan, the evening of 27th of Ramadan, the Hijri New Year, the Prophet's birthday, and the occasions of the Night Journey (*Isra' and Mi'raj*).

The Hebron Agreement, signed on 17/1/1997 between the PLO leadership and the Israel, further consolidated the aftermath of the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre. It divided Hebron into two areas, H1 and H2. H2 remains under full Israeli control and includes Shuhada Street, the Wholesale Market, Tel Rumeida, the Old City and the Ibrahimi Mosque, extending to the settlements of Kiryat Arba and Givat Harsina.[149] H1, by contrast, is under Palestinian administrative control and covers the rest of the city's neighbourhoods. This division has severely restricted access to the Ibrahimi Mosque for most residents and has contributed to a broader socio-spatial dynamic that effectively pushes Palestinians out of the Old City and the Ibrahimi Mosque's surrounding areas.

As part of efforts to expand its control over the mosque to encompass its restoration and administration, Israel introduced a plan in 2020 to install an elevator facilitating settler access to the Ibrahimi Mosque, and began foundational excavation works on 10/8/2021.[150] According to the Hebron Reconstruction Committee, the project would appropriate 91 m² of the mosque's area, in addition to 300 m² designated for external courtyards and access corridors.[151] This marked the beginning of a broader effort to strip the Palestinian Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and the Hebron Reconstruction Committee of their restoration authority. On 11/7/2024, Israel imposed the installation of temporary metal panels over the mosque's open courtyard as a prelude to constructing a permanent roof. After the Palestinian Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs rejected the measure, the Israeli government moved on 26/2/2025 to revoke the Awqaf's authority over the restoration and maintenance of the Ibrahimi Mosque.[152] This was followed in April 2025 by the removal of the mosque's director and head custodian, and on 25/8/2025 Israeli forces forcibly cleared restoration equipment from the mosque and ordered the Awqaf not to retain any of it.[153]

In November 2025, Israel suspended the confiscation order targeting the uncovered courtyard entrances of the Ibrahimi Mosque, and on 31/12/2025 approved plans for a permanent roof over the courtyard.[154] It later removed the mosque's director, Mu'taz Abu Sneineh, and its head custodian, Humam Abu Murkhiyyah, on 18/1/2026.[155]

Simultaneously, Israeli forces refused to hand over the mosque during the ten days traditionally allocated for Muslim religious occasions in 2025, including Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, while granting Jewish settlers control during their own religious holidays. This constituted a further step toward consolidating Jewish dominance over the mosque's identity and administration.

2. Al-Istiklal Cemetery in Haifa

Al-Istiklal Cemetery in Haifa remained subject to repeated attacks by settlers and Israeli authorities because it contains the remains of Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam. The issue resurfaced on 12/8/2025, when National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir called for the cemetery's demolition during a session of the Knesset Internal Affairs and Environment Committee.[156] Later, on 10/12/2025, Israeli police removed a tent erected by the Waqf Committee beside al-Qassam's grave to facilitate ongoing visitation.[157]

3. Holy Sites in GS During the Gaza War[158]

According to Gaza's Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, Israel targeted 1,160 of GS's 1,244 mosques, leaving 93% either partially or completely destroyed. Of these, 909 mosques (73%) were entirely razed, including the Great Omari Mosque, the oldest mosque in GS.

Israel also destroyed 40 of Gaza's 60 cemeteries (67%), including 22 that were completely obliterated. Religious figures were likewise targeted during the war, with more than 233 imams and khatibs killed.

Fourth: Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem and the Rest of Palestine

Israel approaches the Palestinian population through the same logic of exclusion characteristic of a settler-colonial project that seeks land without its indigenous inhabitants, to be replaced by Israeli settlers. With the rise of Religious Zionism, however, there has been a shift in the motivations guiding attacks on holy sites. Certain Islamic sites are targeted through a logic of appropriation and replacement, most notably *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the Ibrahimi Mosque, Joseph's Tomb in Nablus,

and Bilal bin Rabah Mosque in Bethlehem. Other Islamic sites are subjected to a logic of hostility and erasure as elements of an unwanted identity. A similar logic extends to Christian holy sites across Palestine. In this context, some of these sites have increasingly become more directly implicated in the conflict, while both Islamic and Christian holy sites remain broadly exposed to a comprehensive logic of erasure.

1. Targeting of Churches During the GS War[159]

Three historic churches in GS were targeted during the offensive. The first was the Church of Saint Porphyrius in the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City, dating to the 5th century CE and regarded as the third oldest church in the world. It was struck twice in the early stages of the war, on 10/10/2023 and 19/10/2023, resulting in the killing of displaced civilians sheltering inside.

The second was the Baptist Church, affiliated with the Anglican Episcopal Church, established in Gaza in 1882 and housing a hospital within its compound. On 17/10/2023, the hospital was hit in a mass-casualty strike that killed more than 500 displaced persons and patients, with further attacks reported thereafter. The third was the Church of the Holy Family, the only Catholic church in GS, founded in the early 20th century by Franciscan monks.

2. Attacks on Churches and Monasteries

On 30/1/2026, video footage from a fixed camera at the open gate of the Church of Gethsemane documented a group of students from Jewish religious schools passing by while repeatedly spitting on the ground in front of the church as an expression of hostility. The clip itself is only a few seconds long.[160] On 19/2/2026, Israeli settlers wrote racist slogans targeting Christians on the walls of the Visitation Church in the depopulated village of Ain Karem west of Jerusalem. The same slogans were also sprayed on several vehicles parked nearby.[161]

3. Restricting Worship

Restrictions on Christian worship, particularly during Easter at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, have become an annual pattern of pressure and harassment. This is especially evident during pilgrimages for prayers inside the church and intensifies when coinciding with periods of war or escalation, as in 2021. The same pattern recurred during and after the Gaza war. On 4/5/2024, Israeli police

erected checkpoints around the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Aftimos Market (Muristan) area to block access on Holy Saturday according to the Eastern churches' calendar.[162] Access for WB Palestinians was further restricted through quotas, while some worshippers were violently assaulted.[163]

Similarly, on 19/4/2025, when Easter coincided for both Eastern and Western churches, police once again set up checkpoints and closed roads leading to the church, attacked worshippers en route, and continued to bar Christians from the WB from entering the site.[164]

Moreover, during the 12-day war against Iran, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was subjected to the same assertion of claimed Israeli sovereignty, resulting in its closure from the morning of 13/6/2025 until the morning of 25/6/2025.[165]

4. Decline in Arab Christians in Palestine and Jerusalem

The number of Palestinian Arab Christians has steadily declined since the British occupation of Palestine in 1917 and the emergence of the Zionist project. Their share fell from 10.8% of the total Palestinian population, and 9.6% of the total population living in Palestine including Zionist settlers, according to the official British Mandate census of 1922,[166] to 3% of Palestinians in historical Palestine, and 1.5% of the total population of historical Palestine including Israelis in 2024.[167] This represents the lowest proportion of Christians relative to the overall population of Palestine since the advent of Christianity in the land. As such, it should be viewed with serious concern, not only because it undermines a key component of the Palestinian social fabric, but also because it may enable extremist Christian movements to advance claims that Christianity has disappeared from its birthplace. In turn, this could revive new crusading narratives in the future, with potentially broader implications for Palestine and the Arab countries more generally.

Fifth: Israeli Settlement Expansion in Jerusalem and the WB

Accurate figures on the number of Jewish settlers in the WB remain unavailable, as Israeli statistics deliberately avoid reporting precise totals. According to the *Statistical Yearbook of Palestine 2025* issued by PCBS, largely based on Israeli sources, the settler population in the WB stood at about 286 thousand in 1994, at

the onset of the Oslo Accords' implementation. By 2024, this figure had risen to 779 thousand,[168] reflecting an increase of about 270% over three decades.

By contrast, the Applied Research Institute–Jerusalem (ARIJ), which specialises in land and settlement studies in the WB, estimated on 14/5/2024 that the settler population exceeded 954 thousand, including 350 thousand settlers (36.7%) in occupied East Jerusalem.[169] Based on these estimates, the settler population grew by about 330% during the same period.

1. Outposts

These outposts are established by settlers through caravans or mobile homes that function as the nucleus of further expansion into Palestinian land. Over time, they are integrated into infrastructure and service networks, gradually evolving from settler-led initiatives into settlements formally supported by the Israeli authorities. They are often misleadingly labelled "illegal settlements," while those backed by Israeli authorities are described as "legal settlements," as though Israel were the arbiter of legality. In fact, all settlement activity on Palestinian land is illegal.

The number of outposts reached a record high of 89 in 2025, with their annual growth developing as follows:

Table 5/3: Growth of Outposts 2022–2025[170]

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025
No. of Outposts	12	18	51	89

The table shows that the number of outposts established annually increased almost sevenfold within only four years. Concurrently, Israeli authorities expanded official support by integrating 13 outposts into state service networks in 2024[171] and about 22 more in 2025.[172] This reflects a coordinated dynamic in which official backing intensifies alongside the growing number of newly established outposts.

Table 6/3: Distribution of the New Outposts in 2024–2025 by Governorate

Governorate	New outposts 2024	New outposts 2025
Ramallah	15	19
Hebron	11	22
Bethlehem	11	11
Nablus	4	14
Salfit	2	4
Tubas	2	4
Jericho	3	6
Jerusalem	1	8
Tulkarm	2	1
Jenin	–	–
Qalqilya	–	2
Total	**51**	**91**

2. Official Settlement Plans and Tenders

Settlement construction advances through three stages: the preparation of urban plans submitted for approval, their partial endorsement by planning committees, and finally the issuance of implementation tenders. In 2024, 111 master plans were submitted, proposing 13,189 housing units. Of these, 60 were advanced for approval, enabling 4,253 units, while 34 tenders were issued for 1,039 units.[173]

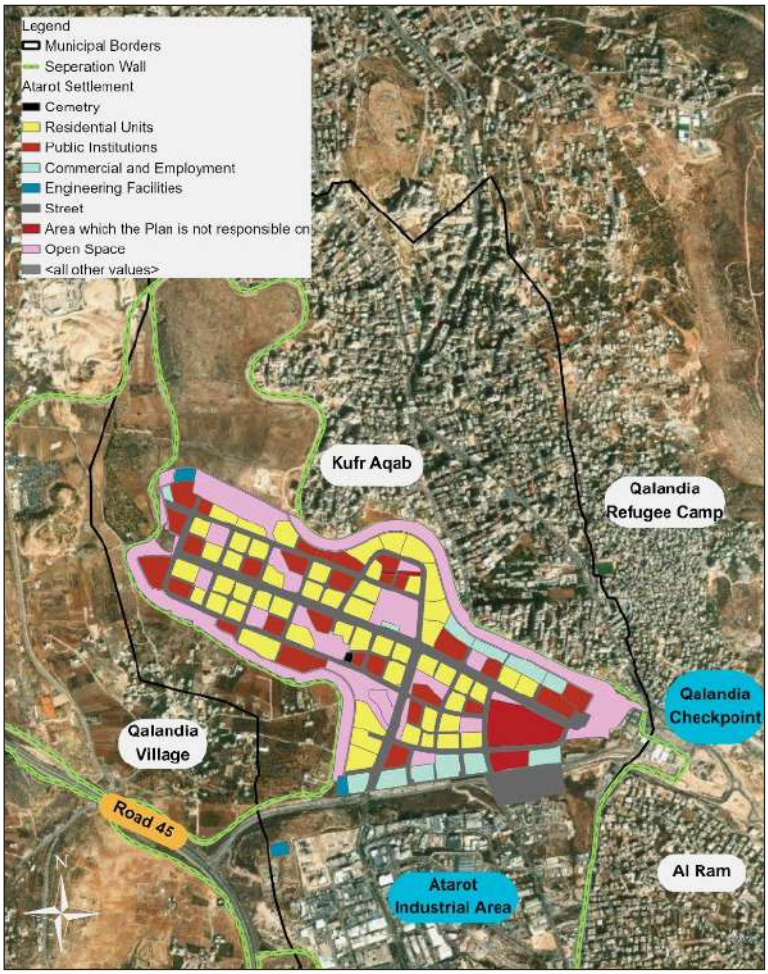
In 2025, this pace accelerated significantly amid what was perceived as a permissive wartime environment. A total of 265 master plans were submitted, covering 34,979 housing units. Of these, 198 were advanced for approval for roughly 20,850 units, including 10,098 units issued for implementation, around ten times the 2024 figure.[174]

3. New Settlements to Reshape Jerusalem

One of the most consequential developments during the Gaza war was Israel's advancement of major settlement projects that had long been deferred within a gradual strategic framework. Israeli leaders increasingly came to view the war in GS as a favourable opportunity for decisive action, particularly after the resumption of the war between 18/3 and 10/10/2025. Consequently, Israel moved forward with major settlement projects that had previously faced US and European opposition, such as E1. It also advanced projects that had long been postponed because of their political sensitivity and potential impact on relations with Jordan, including the Atarot settlement project on the site of Qalandia Airport. By 2025, these projects had entered either the approval or implementation stage. The most prominent included:

a. The Atarot Settlement on the Site of the Closed Qalandia International Airport: Planned over 1,234 dunams and comprising 9 thousand housing units, the project, together with the Atarot Industrial Zone and the Qalandia checkpoint, would complete the geographic isolation of Jerusalem from Ramallah. It would sever territorial contiguity between Jerusalem's Arab neighbourhoods within the Separation Wall and Ramallah, while further entrenching the effective separation of Kafr 'Aqab from Jerusalem within the Separation Wall, despite its formal inclusion within the municipal boundaries declared by Israeli authorities.

Map 6/3: The Atarot Settlement Plan on the Lands of Qalandia Airport Completes the Separation of Jerusalem from Ramallah[175]

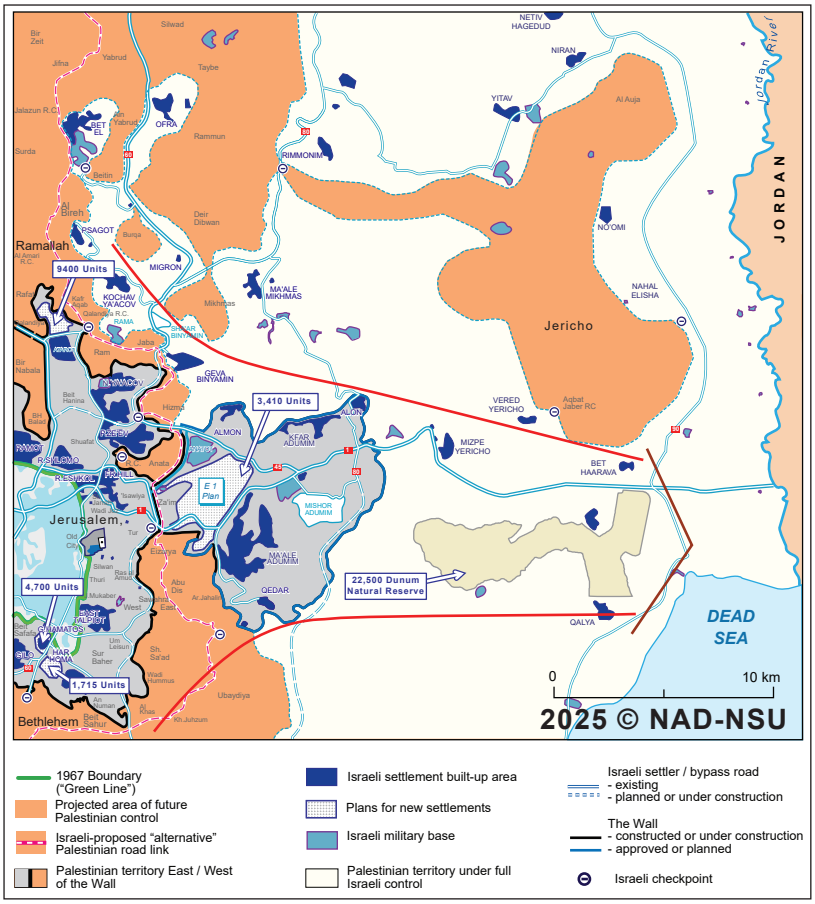


b. The E1 Project: This long-standing settlement plan aims to connect Jerusalem with the Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc to the east. It has faced US and EU opposition for decades due to its implications for disrupting territorial contiguity between the northern and southern WB. Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich advanced the project toward final approval on 14/8/2025,[176] and the Israeli government formally approved it on 20/8/2025. The plan envisions approximately 3,400 housing units and would consolidate the territorial link between Jerusalem and Ma'ale Adumim,[177] which is itself undergoing significant expansion expected to further increase its scale over the coming years.

c. Expansion of the Giv'at HaMatos Settlement in Beit Safafa: Originally comprising 2,610 housing units, the settlement was expanded in 2021 with an additional 300 units, followed by a further 1,200 units approved on 20/4/2023, with implementation beginning in 2024. The project would bring the total to over 4,100 units.[178] If realized, it would consolidate two layers of separation: Isolating Beit Safafa and Sharfat from surrounding Jerusalem neighbourhoods, and severing geographic contiguity between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, disrupting what would otherwise be a continuous urban and spatial connection absent Israeli occupation.

d. Eastern Expansion of the Har Homa Settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim: This expansion advances at the expense of the adjacent Jerusalem neighbourhood of Umm Tuba. According to the Negotiations Affairs Department, it would add about 1,700 housing units to the settlement.[179]

Map 7/3: Major Settlement Expansions in and Around Jerusalem[180]



Sixth: Israeli Aggression on Palestinian Land and Property

1. Displacement of RCs in the Northern WB

The Jenin Battalion emerged in the aftermath of the "Freedom Tunnel" jailbreak on 6/9/2021, when six Palestinian prisoners escaped from the heavily fortified Gilboa Prison. Its formation was also shaped by the broader momentum generated by the May 2021 Sword of Jerusalem Battle, during which the resistance in GS established an unprecedented deterrence equation with Israel since 1948. This model subsequently diffused to other RCs in the WB, particularly Nur Shams RC and Tulkarm RC, as well as Tubas and Far'a RC.

In parallel to the emergence of this resistance model, which was widely seen as signalling the potential for a renewed uprising in WB, the Israeli authorities launched a prolonged military campaign in the northern WB RCs in March 2022, known as Operation Break the Wave.[181] The operation involved sustained raids, targeted killings and field executions, including the first use of airstrikes in WB since 2004. It also incorporated "mowing the lawn" tactics under Israeli security doctrine, and quickly expanded into broader, systematic destruction of RCs, their entrances, and surrounding areas, alongside efforts to reshape their spatial and security configurations. These operations generated intermittent armed and popular responses. This was evident in the raid on Jenin RC, during which Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was killed on 11/5/2022.[182] Likewise, the arrest of Bassam al-Saadi, a senior PIJ figure in Jenin RC, triggered escalation with GS in the Unity of the Arenas Battle led by the PIJ on 5/8/2022.

Israeli operations against RCs in WB intensified, culminating in a large-scale military campaign launched on 3/7/2023, titled Operation Home and Garden.[183] The designation reflected an explicit framing of the WB as a backyard to the "secure Israeli home," and led to the partial displacement of residents from Jenin RC, alongside efforts to reshape its entrances and their security structure. Following the rupture of Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the subsequent shift in Israeli security doctrine from deterrence to pre-emptive, destructive warfare against all perceived sources of resistance, as well as efforts to implement the "Generals' Plan" in northern GS by rendering it uninhabitable, the Israeli army launched a broader assault on the three principal RCs, Jenin RC, Tulkarm RC and Nur Shams RC, on 21/1/2025 under Operation Iron Wall. The operation involved systematic

house-to-house incursions, demolitions and forced displacement, and by May 2025 resulted in declared Israeli control over the RCs, alongside extensive demolition and reconfiguration, with residents still barred from returning as of the time of writing.

The total number of displaced persons from the three RCs reached 33,362 by 31/12/2025, as follows:

Table 7/3: Palestinians Displaced from Northern WB RCs as of 31/12/2025[184]

RC	Jenin RC	Tulkarm RC	Nur Shams RC	Total
No. of Displaced	12,557	11,862	8,943	33,362

As Israeli forces continued to bar access to the three RCs and designate them as closed military zones, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OCHA-oPt) conducted, in October 2025, a satellite-based assessment of the damage sustained by the three RCs in cooperation with the UNOSAT. The assessment found that Israeli forces were carrying out an ongoing process of spatial reconfiguration of the RCs, including the opening of wide roads across their areas, alongside the excavation of these routes and the removal of water and sewage infrastructure, as well as the stripping of asphalt. This also included the restructuring of RC entry points. The operations resulted in the demolition or damage of 1,460 structures, averaging 45% of buildings across the three RCs (see table 8/3). Satellite imagery further indicated that demolition activity and the deployment of Israeli military bulldozers were still ongoing.

Table 8/3: Destroyed Structures in Northern WB RCs According to UNOSAT Satellite Imagery Analysis as of 16/10/2025[185]

RC	Destroyed	Severely damaged	Moderately damaged	Total	% of RC structures
Jenin RC	201	117	358	676	52
Tulkarm RC	254	52	96	402	36
Nur Shams RC	147	37	198	382	48
Total	**602**	**206**	**652**	**1,460**	**45 (Average)**

Although Israeli authorities have not formally declared a policy toward these three RCs, *Al-Akhbar* newspaper reported conditions attributed to the US security coordinator between Israel and the PA, General Michael Fenzel. These conditions included:[186]

- Preventing UNRWA's return to the three RCs.
- Reclassifying them as urban neighbourhoods and changing their names.
- Transferring administrative and service responsibilities to municipal authorities in nearby cities.
- Making the return of the RCs' population contingent on individual Israeli security clearance.

2. Decision on "Settlement of Land Title" in WB

On 11/5/2025, the Israeli security cabinet approved the process of land registration or settlement of land title in WB. Formally, the measure concerns the registration of land in the land registry and the adjudication of ownership claims. In practice, however, it constitutes a step toward the annexation of the WB through the gradual transfer of land records from the Jordanian and Palestinian land authorities to the Israeli Land Registry (Tabu), thereby establishing Israeli institutions as the authoritative body over land ownership in WB.[187] This direction was further reinforced on 23/7/2025, when the Israeli Knesset approved a non-binding motion urging the government to annex the WB. The resolution declares that WB is "an inseparable part of the Land of Israel, the historical, cultural and spiritual homeland of the Jewish people" and that "Israel has the natural, historical and legal right to all of the territories of the Land of Israel." It called on the Israeli government to "apply Israeli sovereignty, law, judgment and administration to all the areas of Jewish settlement of all kinds in Judea, Samaria and the Jordan Rift Valley."[188]

A coalition of human rights organizations petitioned the Israeli Supreme Court against the Israeli cabinet's WB decision on 11/9/2025, but the Court rejected the appeal on 27/1/2026. Shortly thereafter, on 8/2/2026, the Israeli government authorized the direct registration of WB land to settlers through the Land Registry (Tabu), bypassing the settlement council (Yesha Council), Ministry of

Construction and Housing and the Ministry of Defense. This effectively opened the WB real estate market to individual settlers. These measures culminated on 15/2/2026 with the resumption of the settlement of land title procedures in WB following the removal of the legal impediment. The government set a target of settling 15% of unregistered WB land by 2030, about 109 km², or 1.6% of the WB's total area within four years.[189] The decision carries significant implications for the gradual de facto annexation of the WB. It shifts the "burden of proof" onto Palestinian landowners whose properties were never formally registered under Palestinian or Jordanian administration, while positioning Israeli occupation authorities as the final arbiter of ownership claims.[190]

3. Settler Attacks

According to OCHA-oPt, the years 2023–2025 recorded the highest levels of settler attacks in WB since documentation began in 2006. During this period, settlers carried out 4,575 attacks, resulting in the killing of 50 Palestinians and the injury of 4,618 others. The attacks also led to the uprooting or destruction of 69 thousand trees and saplings, and damage to 2,200 vehicles.[191] As shown in table 9/3, settler violence escalated steadily over the three-year period.

Table 9/3: Settler Attacks in the WB 2023–2025[192]

Year	2023	2024	2025
No. of Settler attacks	1,291	1,449	1,835
Incidents resulting in displacement	1,638	621	1,659

The geographic distribution of these attacks was as follows:

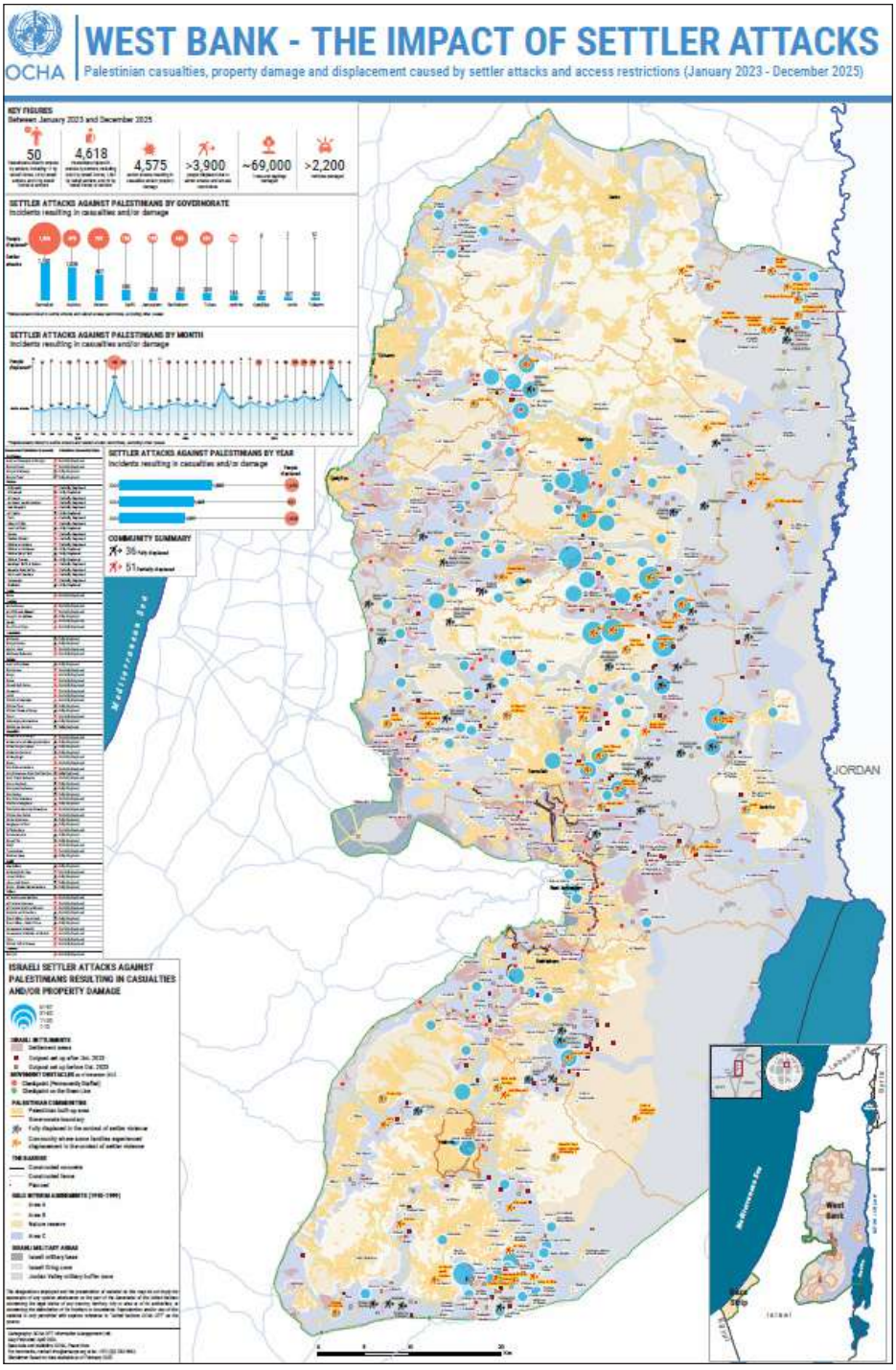
Table 10/3: Settler Attacks in the WB 2023–2025, by governorate[193]

Governorate	No. of Settler attacks	Percentage (%)
Ramallah	1,152	25.2
Nablus	1,028	22.5
Hebron	807	17.6
Salfit	332	7.3
Jerusalem	254	5.6
Bethlehem	253	5.6
Tubas	235	5.1
Jericho	163	3.5
Qalqilya	141	3.1
Jenin	107	2.3
Tulkarm	103	2.2
Total	**4,575**	**100**

An analysis of the table 10/3 shows that nearly two-thirds of settler attacks (65.3%) are concentrated in three governorates: Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron. By contrast, the three northwestern governorates, Qalqilya, Jenin and Tulkarm, record the lowest share, collectively accounting for just 7.6%. This is notable given that Jenin and Tulkarm have been central targets of Israeli military operations, as noted earlier, while Qalqilya has effectively become an isolated enclave from the rest of the WB.

Map 8/3 further indicates that settler violence in Tubas is confined to its eastern perimeter toward the Jordan Rift Valley. In Nablus, it is concentrated in the southern belt, with a slight eastward shift around the settlements of Yitzhar, Itamar and Bracha, which function as key hubs of settler violence. These attacks primarily target the southern village cluster; Burin, Madama, ‘Asira al-Qibliya, Huwwara, Beita and ‘Awarta, before extending southeast of Nablus toward Beit Furik and Beit Dajan, and intensifying further in Qusra, Jalud and Duma.

Map 8/3: Overview of Settler Attacks, Displacement, Settlements and the Separation Wall in WB[194]



Moving southward, attacks concentrate along the eastern belt of Ramallah's villages, running north–south from Turmus'ayya and Sinjil to al-Mughayyir and Ein Samiya, and further south toward Deir Dibwan and Burqa. In the Jerusalem area, they are similarly focused in Mikhmas, Bariyet Hizma, and the Khan al-Ahmar and al-Muntar area. In Bethlehem, incidents are split between the Etzion settlement bloc, which encircles the area from the west and southwest, and the eastern periphery, particularly Bariyet Tuqu' and Bariyet Kisan. In Hebron, they are concentrated in Masafer Bani Na'im and Masafer Yatta, as well as around al-Karmil and Susiya, extending southeast along Yatta.

On this basis, more than two-thirds of attacks are concentrated along two main axes: the Jordan Rift Valley corridor, encompassing villages and herding communities across the eastern WB, and the southern Nablus axis. Smaller, dispersed pockets extend westward into northwestern Nablus, as well as into Jerusalem and the southwestern outskirts of Bethlehem.

Combined with the Israeli access restrictions, particularly checkpoints and road gates, settler violence has contributed to the displacement of more than 3,900 Palestinians over the three years. Most are Bedouins and livestock herders living in settled communities while maintaining a Bedouin mode of production. They are distributed across 87 communities, of which 36 have been fully displaced and 51 partially displaced.

A closer look at displaced communities underscores their concentration in the Jordan Rift Valley and adjacent escarpments: 23 of the fully displaced communities (64%) and 33 of the partially displaced (about 65%) are located in this eastern corridor spanning the WB from north to south.

In sum, the analysis indicates that settler violence is systematic rather than random, and broadly consistent with the strategic vision first articulated by one of the earliest architects of post-1967 WB policy, Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon. Despite apparent ideological divisions, Allon associated with the "Zionist left," and settlers largely aligned with the far-right, particularly Religious Zionism, the operational logic of a broader settler-colonial framework of territorial consolidation ultimately prevails. This produces a continuous settlement axis that cuts across ideological boundaries, concentrated in the Jordan Rift Valley and its surrounding slopes, and extending through the central corridor toward gradual encroachment on Jerusalem.

If this conclusion is correct, settler violence is likely to intensify in the Jordan Rift Valley, shifting from the small rural hamlets and peripheral sites (*khirab*) surrounding villages and towns to the towns themselves. In this pattern, it would first exhaust the *khirab* around Tubas before turning toward the town proper, with similar dynamics in Duma, al-Mughayyir, Mikhmas, Bani Na'im and Yatta. This also suggests an emerging frontline of popular resistance to settler violence, which could serve as a basis for sustained local resilience capable of disrupting settler expansion and limiting its deeper penetration into the WB.

4. Demolition of Structures and the Reconfiguration of Space in WB

According to OCHA-oPt, 2024 witnessed the highest level of demolition of Palestinian-owned structures in WB, including east Jerusalem, since records began in 2009. A total of 1,769 structures were demolished, resulting in the displacement of 4,265 Palestinians. In 2025, 1,659 structures were demolished, leading to the displacement of 2,113 Palestinians.[195] These figures are distributed across the spatial categories established under the Oslo Accords:

Table 11/3: Israeli Demolition of Palestinian Structures in WB, Including East Jerusalem 2024–2025[196]

Year	Area C	Areas A & B	East Jerusalem	Total
2024	1,056	494	219	**1,769**
2025	1,320	82	257	**1,659**

The expansion of demolition activity into Areas A and B, designated under the Oslo Accords, began in 2023 and reflects a broader Israeli policy shift aimed at weakening the administrative distinctions established by the Accords. This trend effectively extends the scope of the Israeli Civil Administration, despite the Oslo Accords, which assigns administrative and security control of Area A to the PA, and administrative control in Area B alongside joint Palestinian-Israeli security control. The table below traces the evolution of demolition activity in Areas A and B in the WB since 2009. It excludes homes demolished during recent Israeli military operations in RCs across the WB:

Table 12/3: Israeli Demolition of Palestinian Structures in Areas A and B in WB 2009–2025[197]

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No. of Structures	1	6	3	16	1	13	12	28	11

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
No. of Structures	15	25	9	8	30	266	494	82

Overall, OCHA-oPt documented the demolition of 13,769 Palestinian structures across the WB, including east Jerusalem, between 2009 and 2025, resulting in the displacement of 21,862 Palestinians.[198] The distribution is as follows:

Table 13/3: Israeli Demolition of Palestinian Structures and Displacement in WB 2009–2025[199]

Area	Area C	Areas A & B	East Jerusalem	Total
Structures Demolished	10,277	1,020	2,472	**13,769**
Percentage (%)	74.6	7.4	18	**100**
Displaced Palestinians	11,899	4,850	5,113	**21,862**
Percentage (%)	54.4	22.2	23.4	**100**

Area C comprises 60% of the WB and includes 532 towns and villages, 241 of which lie entirely within Area C and remain, under the Oslo Accords, under full Israeli administrative and security control. While no official population data exist, estimates range between180–300 thousand residents,[200] with some sources placing the figure at about 340 thousand.[201] OCHA-oPt conducted partial surveys of these villages in 2008 and 2010, and in 2013 published its "Area C Vulnerability Profile," estimating the population at 297 thousand.[202] In 2014, this estimate was updated to 300 thousand,[203] an increase of 3 thousand. Extrapolating a comparable growth rate yields a current estimate of approximately 340 thousand. On this basis, it is reasonable to infer that roughly one in every thirty residents has been directly displaced as a result of demolition policies carried out by Israeli occupation authorities in their towns and villages over the past 16 years (2009–2025).

In Jerusalem, with a population of 401,400 at the end of 2024,[204] an estimated one in every 78 Palestinians has been displaced through demolition policies over the period 2009–2025. In Areas A and B, with a combined population of about 2.69 million,[205] the figure is roughly one in every 555 Palestinians.

In sum, the PA's framing of a "Palestinian National Project" has been largely confined to the 36% of the WB comprising Areas A and B, while Area C has been subject to a sustained pattern of demolition and displacement oriented toward de facto annexation, now entering an advanced stage. Jerusalem, by contrast, has experienced a slower process of demographic attrition aimed at consolidating de facto annexation, despite receiving significantly greater political and symbolic attention than Area C, where violence has been more intense but less visible.

The combined effects of Israel's unilateral control over Area C through demolitions, settler violence in these areas as noted earlier, the concentration of state institutions and development planning in Areas A and B, alongside the Separation Wall, checkpoints and other mobility restrictions (addressed in a later section), have produced a profound reconfiguration of space in WB. This arguably represents the most significant structural transformation to date. As a result, 78% of the WB population is concentrated in 36% of its territory. In practical terms, the viable space of the Palestinian National Project, as partially structured through the remaining Oslo Accords on the ground, is now largely confined to 2,035 km² out of 2,767 km², about 7.5% of historic Palestine. This distribution is illustrated in the following table:

Table 14/3: Distribution of the Palestinian Population Across WB

Geography	Area (km²)[206]	% of WB	Population	% of WB Palestinians
Area A & B	2,035	36	2,690,000	78
Area C	3,375	59.6	340,000	10
Jerusalem (Area J1)	71	1.2	400,000	12
Other*	179	3.2	–	–
Total	**5,660**	**100**	**3,430,000**	**100**

* Israel has designated 166.5 km² as natural reserves, while 8.3 km² are classified in Palestinian Authority statistics as " not specified," and 4 km² correspond to Hebron H2.

5. The Separation Wall: Construction and Impacts on the Palestinian Landscape

The Separation Wall in WB extends approximately 710 km, more than twice the length of the Green Line separating the WB from the 1948 occupied territories (323 km). Roughly 64% of the Wall (about 454 km) has been completed,[207] while the remainder remains in various stages of planning. Progress has been slowed in certain segments due to legal challenges[208] and implementation constraints. The planned route is designed to encircle major settlement blocs within the WB, effectively severing their connection to surrounding Palestinian areas. These include four key zones: the Kedumim Finger in northern Qalqilya, the Ariel Finger in Salfit, the Ma'ale Adumim bloc east of Jerusalem, and the Etzion bloc southwest of Jerusalem. Partial fencing has been installed at key access points to enable interim closure of movement pending final route determinations.[209]

6. Bypass Roads and Movement Obstacles

By December 2025, the number of movement obstacles imposed by Israel in the WB had reached 925, according to OCHA-oPt. This is 43% more than the annual average of 647 movement obstacles in the preceding 20 years. Half of this increase occurred between early 2023 and April 2024,[210] suggesting a sustained policy of spatial tightening that predates Operation al-Aqsa Flood on 7/10/2023 rather than a purely reactive response to it. Spread across the WB's 5,660 km², this amounts to about one obstacle per 6.1 km², compared to one per 8.7 km² previously. The change effectively illustrates a further contraction of Palestinian mobility, as the average unobstructed space available for movement has diminished from 8.7 km² to 6.1 km². To contextualize, this is roughly equivalent to about 30% of the municipal area of Beirut (19.8 km²), the smallest Arab capital by land area.

With the WB population reaching 3.43 million by the end of 2025,[211] this amounts to one movement obstacle for every 3,708 Palestinians. Over the past two decades, the proportion of permanent checkpoints has increased fourfold, rising from 15% in 2006 to 60% of all movement obstacles in the WB by the end of 2025.[212]

About half of these obstacles (459) block or hinder access to major roads connecting different parts of the WB, while 26% block access to Road 60, the main north-south artery in WB. This pattern significantly undermines territorial

contiguity and reinforces the separation between the northern and southern WB. Furthermore, the Separation Wall cuts off extensive agricultural land from its owners, as 85% of its route runs inside WB territory. Along it, 62 agricultural barrier gates have been installed, the majority of which are closed year-round. Around 26% are closed year-round, preventing any access, while 74% open only for a few days during the olive harvest season. This restricts farmers largely to seasonal access and severely limits year-round cultivation and maintenance of olive groves.[213]

Area H2 in Hebron, designated under the Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron (the Hebron Protocol), encompassing the Old City, Shuhada Street, and adjacent settlements, is the most heavily burdened area in terms of movement restrictions. In this compact zone, Israeli authorities impose 101 movement obstacles, accounting for roughly 11% of all such obstacles in the WB. Since 7/10/2023, access to the sealed section of Shuhada Street has been further restricted, with passage through checkpoints limited to 13 hours daily, between 7:00 and 20:00.[214] The area is home to about 7 thousand Palestinians and an estimated 800 settlers.[215]

In Jerusalem, over 3,500 Palestinians live in 18 communities on the East Jerusalem side of the Separation Wall, despite their status as WB residents. Access to their homes is therefore contingent on special permits issued by the Israeli military, as they fall within the "seam zone," including Beit Iksa, Nabi Samuel, and the Khalayleh area west of al-Jib. In September 2025, the Israeli military revised the criteria for issuing these permits,[216] requiring all residents to undergo the full administrative process anew to maintain or regain access to their homes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *al-Aqsa* Mosque and Jerusalem more broadly stand at a critical juncture, as Israel increasingly treats them as a focal point for strategic resolution and concentrates its efforts on achieving this through a range of instruments. At the same time, they have historically functioned as a site of constraint, repeatedly generating reversals and preventing such outcomes through diverse forms of resistance and defense. This dynamic has shaped the past two decades. While Israel has sought to terminate it through the genocide war, it remains susceptible

to renewal and reactivation. In this sense, the struggle over *al-Aqsa* and Jerusalem may serve as a potential entry point for reconstituting agency in the post-genocide phase and for re-engaging a broader regional role in confrontation, given that *al-Aqsa* Mosque is not the responsibility of Palestinians alone.

The Ibrahimi Mosque represents a parallel case of decisive transformation. Its limited size, the surrounding settlement structure, the 1994 massacre, and the 1997 Hebron Protocol collectively turned it into a testing ground for Judaization measures now increasingly replicated at *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Today, the site has moved beyond spatial division toward the consolidation of Jewish dominance, a trajectory that requires active resistance. Any reversal of the Judaization measures imposed there could likewise have positive implications for *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

At the same time, Israel continues its campaign of restrictions and hostility toward Jerusalem's churches, particularly during Easter. Churches, monasteries and clergy face recurring attacks, while the presence of Palestinian Arab Christians continues to decline. This represents a serious historical threat that necessitates reinforcing their presence and rebuilding ties with the Palestinian Christian diaspora.

Meanwhile, settlement expansion accelerated markedly in 2025, driven by an Israeli perception that the Gaza war had opened a window for decisive action. Long-frozen projects were revived, implementation accelerated, and settlement outposts multiplied, while being rapidly integrated into the framework of Israeli state support in coordination with settlers. At the same time, settler violence has likewise reached levels unprecedented since 1967, resulting in the displacement of large Palestinian communities. This violence is concentrated in the *khirab* and Bedouin or semi-Bedouin communities of the Jordan Rift Valley and its escarpments, reflecting the same strategic logic that shaped the Allon Plan following the occupation of WB in 1967. Accordingly, greater attention must be directed toward supporting frontline village communities exposed to these attacks and strengthening their popular mobilization, so as to prevent the Israeli occupation's territorial encroachment from advancing unchecked across the WB.

An analysis of house demolitions since 2009, and their distribution across the WB's colonial geography, underscores Israel's unchecked control over Area C and the deep structural damage inflicted by the Oslo Accords on the Palestinian National Project. What remained of that project was effectively confined to

just 7.5% of historic Palestine, thereby enabling Israel to extend demolition policies into Areas A and B as well.

At the same time, several WB RCs have been subjected to military assaults that displaced their entire populations and sought to reconfigure the camps following the destruction of large portions of their infrastructure, estimated at an average of about 45%. As Israel attempts to impose degrading conditions on residents seeking to return, the return of displaced refugees must be regarded as a critical first line of defense for the right of return and a means of preventing Israel from replicating this model across other WB RCs.

Endnotes

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[2] Al-Qastal News channel | Jerusalem, Telegram, 17/9/2023, https://t.me/AlQastalps/122011

[3] See, for example, the recurrence of this on 24/9/2023 during the incursion on the eve of the Jewish "Yom Kippur" holiday in: Al-Qastal News | Jerusalem channel, Telegram, 24/9/2023, https://t.me/AlQastalps/122624

[4] Al-Qastal News | Jerusalem channel, Telegram, 17/9/2023, https://t.me/AlQastalps/122042

[5] The closure began on Yom Kippur, on 25/9/2023, and continued over the following days. See Al-Qastal News | Jerusalem channel, Telegram, 25/9/2023, https://t.me/AlQastalps/122683; Al-Qastal News | Jerusalem channel, Telegram, 30/9/2023, https://t.me/AlQastalps/123145; and Al-Qastal News | Jerusalem channel, Telegram, 30/9/2023, https://t.me/AlQastalps/123174.

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[15] Aljazeera.net, 23/10/2024, https://aja.ws/42d9nu (in Arabic)

[16] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 5/6/2024, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/38495

[17] PIC, 16/10/2025, https://palinfo.com/news/2025/10/16/978453/ (in Arabic)

[18] Safa, 23/12/2025, https://safa.ps/p/399249

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[20] Anadolu Agency, 5/6/2024, https://v.aa.com.tr/3241398 (in Arabic)

[21] Anadolu Agency, 27/6/2025, https://v.aa.com.tr/3614443 (in Arabic)

[22] Aljazeera.net, 30/12/2021, https://aja.me/r8ugj3 (in Arabic)

[23] Jordan News Agency (Petra), 29/12/2022, https://www.petra.gov.jo/Include/InnerPage.jsp?ID=65973&lang=ar&name=external_news

[24] Anadolu Agency, 2/1/2024, https://v.aa.com.tr/3097550 (in Arabic)

[25] *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 1/1/2025.

[26] *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 1/1/2026.

[27] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 31/12/2025, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/45004?single

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[38] Al-Qastal News | Jerusalem channel, Telegram, 17/3/2022, https://t.me/AlQastalps/64514

[39] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 8/3/2023, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/27601

[40] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 25/3/2024, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/37359

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[42] According to figures from the Administration of Jerusalem's Awqaf, the average number of settlers storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque in 2024 was 220 per day, calculated over 243 days of incursions. On this basis, Temple groups recorded nearly double the annual daily average during the seven days of the Festival of Lights (*Hanukkah*). Taken together with several qualitative escalations, this suggests that *Hanukkah* was effectively incorporated in 2024 into the core annual calendar of incursions into *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

[43] Figures for settlers storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque on 3–4/12/2018: Ali Ibrahim, Weekly Review of Developments and Positions in the City of Jerusalem: 28 November – 4 December 2018, Research and Information Department, QII, 5/12/2018, https://qii.media/index.php?s=8&cat=65&id=1129; Figures for settlers storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque on 5 and 10/12/2018: Ali Ibrahim, Weekly Review of Developments and Positions in the City of Jerusalem: 5–11 December 2018, Research and Information Department, QII, 12/12/2018, https://qii.media/index.php?s=8&cat=65&id=1130; and Figures for settlers storming *al-Aqsa* Mosque on 6 and 9/12/2018: Key Israeli Violations Against al-Aqsa Mosque in 2018, WAFA, https://info.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/32002 (in Arabic)

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[45] Al-Qastal News | Jerusalem channel, Telegram, 17/3/2022, https://t.me/AlQastalps/64514

[46] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 14/12/2023, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/35165

[47] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 2/1/2025, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/41202

[48] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 22/12/2025, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/44933

[49] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 29/4/2024, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/38031

[50] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 22/4/2024, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/37934

[51] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 23/4/2024, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/37945

The exchange rate of the dollar against the Israeli shekel was based on the Bank of Israel data in April 2024, which was 3.7433.

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[61] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 8/10/2024, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/40228

[62] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 20/10/2024, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/40358

[63] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 20/10/2024, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/40367

[64] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 20/10/2024, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/40368; and Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 21/10/2024, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/40376

[65] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 17/10/2024, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/40327

[66] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 17/10/2024, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/40326

[67] Alasimaa News channel, Telegram, 24/10/2024, https://t.me/AlasimaN/33805

[68] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 24/10/2024, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/40437

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[84] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 15/4/2025, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/42273

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[94] Middle East Eye (@MiddleEastEye), site of X, 27/5/2025, 4:11 a.m., https://x.com/MiddleEastEye/status/1927170694141337718?s=20

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[97] Al-Quds Albwsalah channel, Telegram, 26/5/2025, https://t.me/alqudsalbwsalah/42640

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In relation to the total population of Palestine, including Jewish settlers, the Jewish population stood at 7,176,000 at the end of 2024. Applying the average growth rate for the past two years, estimated at 1.15%, places the Jewish population at about 7,258,500 by the end of 2025. This brings the combined total of Palestinians and Jewish settlers to about 14,658,500, of whom Palestinian Christians constitute roughly 1.5%.

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Chapter Four

Trajectories of Aggression, Resistance and the Peace Process

Trajectories of Aggression, Resistance and the Peace Process

Introduction

This chapter examines the trajectories of Israeli aggression and Palestinian resistance, highlighting the ferocity and inherently aggressive character of Israel under one of its most extreme governments in the history of Israel. It evaluates the resistance in GS and WB during 2024–2025, reviewing key operations and battles, most notably Operation al-Aqsa Flood, as well as the conditions of prisoners in Israeli prisons. This chapter also examines the expansion of the war to other fronts, as it is no longer confined to GS but has spread to Lebanon, Yemen, Iran, Syria and Iraq. The final section addresses developments in the peace process over the period covered by the report. This process has remained clearly stalled, with no tangible progress achieved; Palestinian–Israeli negotiations were not resumed, nor were any serious new international initiatives introduced to advance it.

The events of 7/10/2023 constituted a decisive turning point in the trajectory of the Arab–Israeli conflict, amounting to a historic breach of the prevailing rules of engagement and restoring the Palestine issue to the center of international attention. On that date, Hamas (Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades) launched Operation al-Aqsa Flood, precipitating an open, multi-front war that generated a new regional reality, while Israel faced unprecedented strategic challenges at both the domestic and external levels. Accordingly, the conflict could no longer be framed as a limited military escalation; rather, it became a contest over the reconfiguration of regional power balances and the future of the region as a whole. Subsequently, the "Middle East" entered a phase of sustained confrontation, defined primarily by Israel's aggression against the GS, alongside a parallel escalation in the WB and a widening of hostilities to Lebanon, Yemen, Iran, Iraq and Syria, within an increasingly intricate regional environment. Operation al-Aqsa Flood and its aftermath thus highlighted the strategic weight of regional resistance actors in the struggle with Israel, while also exposing the profound risks associated with weakening the broader strategic environment or isolating the resistance within the Palestinian arena.

To underscore the intensity of Israel's response to Operation al-Aqsa Flood and its supporting fronts, the Israeli army reported in its 2025 annual report that it carried out approximately 20,900 airstrikes, alongside 430 military operations, across the GS and the WB, as well as in Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Yemen. Within the GS alone, it targeted 19,530 sites and destroyed roughly 13,910 infrastructure elements.[1] According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), Israel conducted at least 10,631 attacks between 1/1 and 5/12/2025, constituting one of the most geographically extensive military campaigns in a single year. ACLED further details that Israel targeted:[2]

- The GS and WB 8,332 times, averaging 25 attacks per day (7,024 in GS and 1,308 in WB).
- Lebanon 1,653 times, despite a ceasefire in effect since 27/11/2024, averaging 5 attacks per day.
- Iran was targeted 379 times, affecting 28 of its 31 provinces.
- Syria 207 times.
- Yemen 48 times.
- Qatar once.
- Tunisian waters twice.
- The waters of Malta and Greece once each.

First: Israeli Aggression and the Resistance in GS

Since 7/10/2023, the GS has endured one of the most intense Israeli military campaigns in its history, featuring comprehensive air, land and naval assaults with highly destructive weaponry, alongside repeated ground incursions and attempts to assert control, yet without achieving a decisive strategic outcome. The operation profoundly shook Israel, prompting serious questions regarding its very "existence and survival." In response, Israeli officials framed the conflict as either a "second war of independence"[3] or an "existential war."[4] Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant further emphasized that "If the fate of Hamas is not complete dismantlement, we will not be able to live in the State of Israel."[5]

Operation al-Aqsa Flood inflicted an unprecedented strategic shock on Israel, which responded by launching a comprehensive campaign against GS that assumed the character of a genocidal war. The operation deliberately targeted both civilians and infrastructure, pursuing major political and military objectives: the elimination of the resistance, particularly Hamas, the restoration of deterrence, the recovery of prisoners, the protection of settlements surrounding GS (Gaza Envelope), and the restructuring of the Strip's political and security landscape, alongside efforts to displace as many residents as possible. The scale of Israel's brutality was unparalleled. The GS endured a complete siege, with electricity, fuel, food, water, and medical supplies entirely cut off. Tens of thousands of Palestinians were killed, hundreds of thousands were wounded, and extensive, systematic destruction was inflicted on infrastructure, residential neighborhoods, hospitals, displacement camps and food storage facilities.

Operation al-Aqsa Flood was launched with the stated objectives of halting Israel's ongoing crimes against the Palestinian people, including its repeated incursions into the *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and securing the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli detention. This was emphasized by Muhammad Daif, known as "Abu Khalid," the commander of Al-Qassam Brigades, at the launch of the operation.[6] In turn, Israel declared war on the GS and initiated Operation Swords of Iron.[7] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated, "This war will take time. It will be difficult. Challenging days are ahead of us."[8] Hundreds of elite fighters from the al-Qassam Brigades infiltrated through 110 breaches in the perimeter fence surrounding GS, advancing up to 22 km into Israeli-occupied territory. In what was widely regarded as an unprecedented operation, they stormed 12 military bases and 22 settlements. According to The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), 1,179 Israelis were killed and 251 others taken captive that day. Israeli media consequently characterized it as one of the darkest days in Israel's history.[9]

The Israeli assault on GS was accompanied by an extensive campaign of disinformation regarding the operation carried out by Hamas, including allegations of child killings and sexual violence, many of which were subsequently discredited. Concurrently, the Palestinian resistance factions displayed notable resilience and tactical flexibility. They sustained a protracted confrontation by maintaining rocket fire, executing ambushes and conducting complex operations behind the lines of Israeli incursions, thereby imposing gradual attrition on Israeli forces despite the

stark asymmetry in capabilities. Within this broader context, Operation al-Aqsa Flood constituted the most consequential act of resistance directed at Israel since its establishment in 1948. It has challenged Israel's security doctrine, struck at the very notion of its existence and functional role, eroded its sense of a secure haven, disrupted normalization efforts, strengthened the case for armed resistance, and coincided with the collapse of the peace process.

Despite the unprecedented number of people killed, injured, and missing, and the extensive destruction across the GS, Israel failed to dismantle Hamas or its military infrastructure. Instead, Israel's retaliation overwhelmingly targeted unarmed civilians, public infrastructure, and government facilities. This approach reflects a Zionist logic grounded in the use of violence, premised on the belief that what cannot be achieved by force can be secured through even greater force.

Over the two years of conflict, the Palestinian resistance demonstrated that, despite its heavy sacrifices and Israel's attempts to dismantle its capabilities and leadership, it could establish a new strategic balance rooted in resilience. It prevented Israel from achieving a decisive victory and turned the confrontation into a war of attrition, without fully dismantling the resistance's military infrastructure, while Israel's security, military, political, and economic costs continued to escalate. The issue of Israeli captives in GS became a central focus of the aggression. Israel failed to secure the release of a single captive by force and could not achieve its stated objectives without negotiating with the resistance, which leveraged the issue to impose a ceasefire, push for lifting the blockade, and advance an Israeli withdrawal from GS, alongside efforts toward a broader prisoner exchange leading to the release of all Palestinian detainees held in Israeli prisons.

1. Developments in the Battle and War on GS

Over two years of Israel's genocidal campaign in GS, its operations have been diverse, combining airstrikes, artillery shelling, and ground incursions, supported by tanks, armored vehicles, bulldozers, and other tools of systematic destruction.

The first ground invasion, launched on 27/10/2023 and continuing until March 2024, focused on the northern sector and Gaza City, with the stated aim of dismantling Hamas and recovering hostages. This offensive deployed tanks and infantry around the Jabalia and Beit Hanoun RCs and culminated in the Battle of Shuja'iyyah, considered the fiercest since the 2014 war.[10]

Following a 7-day humanitarian truce (23–30/11/2023), 240 Palestinian prisoners were released (75 women and 165 minors), while Palestinian resistance secured the release of 80 Israeli prisoners (44 women, 36 minors), including several dual nationals and 27 foreigners. On 3/12/2023, Israel announced an expansion of its ground operation in GS. Israeli Army Radio reported that the military had launched a ground operation north of Khan Yunis in the southern part of GS, while an Israeli government spokesperson stated that the operation was concentrated on Khan Yunis itself. A senior Al-Qassam Brigades commander told Al Jazeera that the operation concentrated on southern GS, with limited northern maneuvers, and noted that 70% of Israeli forces had withdrawn from the north of GS due to operational failures and resistance strikes.[11]

By late December 2023, the Israeli military had expanded its ground offensive to the al-Bureij, al-Nuseirat, and al-Maghazi RCs in central GS, urging civilians to evacuate toward Deir al-Balah. Although Israel claimed control over 65% of the Strip, resistance forces responded with ambushes, including the Shuja'iyyah ambush, which killed 24 Israeli soldiers in a single day.[12] Key battles in Khan Yunis occurred in December 2023, May 2024, and July 2024. In this period, Israel destroyed 68% of GS's agricultural land, disabled half of the southern hospitals, and sustained dozens of troop fatalities.

The Rafah offensive marked a further phase of Israel's military operations in GS, spanning May to August 2024, with the primary aim of securing the borders, particularly the Rafah Crossing with Egypt. Israeli forces gained control of the Muraj axis, effectively incorporating the area between it and Salah al-Din into the "Israeli security zone." The campaign included the destruction of tunnels and roads and the issuance of evacuation orders affecting some 1.5 million residents.

Between 19/1/2025 and 18/3/2025, a fragile ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement was reached, but it quickly unraveled due to repeated Israeli violations. On 15/1/2025, Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin 'Abdulrahman Al Thani announced that a ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement had been reached between the Palestinian resistance and Israel in GS, with implementation set to begin on 19/1/2025. Under its first phase, lasting 42 days, Hamas was to release 33 prisoners in exchange for 1,737 Palestinians, including 296 serving life sentences.[13] Before the second and third phases could

proceed, Israel resumed its assault on GS with intense airstrikes involving 100 aircraft, declaring that the operations would continue as long as deemed necessary and could extend beyond aerial attacks.[14]

In early May 2025, the Israeli government approved a plan to expand ground operations to seize three-quarters of GS under the name Operation Gideon's Chariots, which began on 16/5/2025. The operation involved ground incursions into central and southern GS, accompanied by intensive bombardment of high-rise buildings in Gaza City. Although the operation concluded in August 2025 without fully achieving its objectives, it enabled Israeli forces to establish control over approximately 75% of GS.[15] Subsequently, on 20/8/2025, Defense Minister Israel Katz approved Operation Gideon's Chariots II aimed at capturing Gaza City.[16] On 3/9/2025, Israeli forces launched ground operations in several neighborhoods, including al-Zaytoun and al-Sheikh Radwan, destroying around 30 residential towers and striking more than 500 targets. The Israeli army later announced that it had gained control of roughly 40% of the city. The operation involved tens of thousands of reserve soldiers, some of whom were killed in resistance ambushes.[17] Thereafter, on 16/9/2025, the Israeli army launched the main phase of its ground assault on Gaza City. Israeli military officials estimated that the operation would target up to three thousand Hamas combatants believed to remain inside the city.[18]

On 9/10/2025, US President Donald Trump announced that Israel and Hamas had signed the first phase of his Peace Plan for GS. He stated, "This means that ALL of the Hostages will be released very soon, and Israel will withdraw their Troops to an agreed upon line as the first steps toward a Strong, Durable, and Everlasting Peace." He further indicated that "that the disarmament of Hamas would be part of the second phase of the deal."[19] All living Israeli captives in GS were released, and Israel also received all remaining bodies. Subsequently, on 14/1/2026, the US Special Envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, announced the launch of the second phase of Trump's plan to end the war in GS, which provides about the establishment of a Palestinian technocratic committee, the NCAG, in the Strip.

On 15/1/2026, the Government Media Office in GS announced that, 95 days after the ceasefire took effect on 10/10/2025 and with the second phase of the agreement underway, Israel had committed 1,244 violations of the ceasefire. These violations resulted in 449 fatalities, 1,246 injuries and 50 cases of unlawful

detention. Furthermore, during this 95-day period only 24,611 aid trucks entered GS out of the 57 thousand stipulated under the agreement, an average of 259 trucks per day instead of the agreed 600, reflecting a compliance rate of no more than 43%. Fuel deliveries were even more limited: only 601 fuel trucks entered GS out of the expected 4,750, averaging 6 trucks per day rather than the designated 50, corresponding to a compliance rate of approximately 12%.

At the same time, Israel's continued closure of crossings and its prevention of the entry of tents, mobile homes, caravans, and other shelter materials further aggravated the humanitarian crisis. Combined with winter storms affecting GS at the start of the winter season, these restrictions led to the collapse of more than 50 previously damaged or bombed homes and buildings, resulting in dozens of casualties and injuries. Deaths from extreme cold were also recorded among displaced persons in tents, particularly as more than 127 thousand tents had become unusable, leaving over 1.5 million displaced people without even minimal shelter.[20]

2. Fatalities, Injuries and Destruction

The Government Media Office in GS reported on 5/10/2025 and 10/10/2025 that roughly 90% of the Strip had been destroyed two years after the Israeli war. According to these statistics, 38 hospitals were destroyed or rendered inoperative, and Israel had gained control over approximately 80% of GS through invasion, displacement and sustained bombardment. Since the onset of the war, over 200 thousand tons of explosives were dropped on the territory. The office added that the total fatalities and missing persons reached 77 thousand, including 9,500 still unaccounted for. More than 67 thousand of the deceased were admitted to hospitals, with over 55% being children, women and the elderly.[21] PCBS reported that the number of killed and missing persons reached 81,942.[22] Meanwhile, UN Women stated that more than 38 thousand women and girls were killed (over 22 thousand women and 16 thousand girls) in GS during the period from October 2023 to December 2025, as a result of the Israeli assault.[23] In addition, the Government Media Office in GS reported that among the dead were over 20 thousand children, more than 12,500 women (including 9 thousand mothers), over 22,400 fathers, 1,670 medical personnel, 140 civil defense members, 257 journalists, 176 municipal staff, including four mayors, over 787 police and aid security personnel, and 894 members of the athletic community. The report

further noted that more than 39,022 families were subjected to massacres, with 2,700 entirely wiped from civil records. Over 12 thousand miscarriages occurred due to food and healthcare shortages, while 460 deaths resulted from hunger and malnutrition, including 154 children. The number of injured reached approximately 170 thousand, including 4,800 amputations and 1,200 cases of paralysis.

The Government Media Office in GS reported that Israel struck 96 healthcare centers, rendering them non-operational, and targeted 197 ambulances and 61 civil defense vehicles for rescue and firefighting, while healthcare services endured over 788 attacks. More than 95% of schools were damaged: 670 school buildings and 165 universities and educational institutions were completely destroyed, with 392 partially damaged. The attacks claimed over 13,500 student lives, more than 830 teachers and educational staff, and over 193 scholars and researchers. Israel also destroyed over 835 mosques entirely and damaged more than 180 partially, repeatedly targeted three churches, demolished 40 of 60 cemeteries, exhumed over 2,450 bodies, and established seven mass graves in hospitals. Approximately 300 thousand housing units were completely destroyed, with another 200 thousand heavily or partially damaged rendering them uninhabitable, displacing nearly two million people. Over 288 thousand families were left homeless, forced to live in worn-out tents unfit for habitation, enduring extreme hardship; notably, more than 125 thousand of the 135 thousand tents had deteriorated.

Regarding deliberate starvation, Israel has kept Gaza's crossings closed for over 600 days, blocked the entry of hundreds of thousands of trucks, and targeted numerous food kitchens and distribution centers. This has led to the deaths of more than 460 civilians from hunger and malnutrition, over 2,605 people caught in "death traps" at so-called "US/ Israeli aid" centers and among aid seekers, in addition to 19,124 injuries and more than 200 missing persons. The report also indicates that Israel struck 293 shelters and forced-displacement centers, 47 food kitchens, 61 aid distribution points, and 128 aid convoys, resulting in 540 deaths among aid workers. Furthermore, 650 thousand children face life-threatening malnutrition, while over 22 thousand patients, including more than 5,200 children, require treatment abroad but are barred from traveling by Israel.

Israel destroyed 725 central water wells, rendering them inoperative, and targeted 134 freshwater projects. It also demolished 5,080 kilometers of electricity

networks, 2,285 distribution transformers, over 700 thousand meters of water pipelines, more than 700 thousand meters of sewage networks, and over 3 million meters of roads and streets. Furthermore, 247 government offices, 292 facilities including sports fields and gyms, and 208 of 325 archaeological and heritage sites were destroyed. The occupation devastated more than 94% of agricultural land, out of 178 thousand dunams (178 km²), along with 1,223 agricultural wells and 665 livestock and poultry farms, while the fishing sector was effectively destroyed due to attacks on fishing areas. According to the Government Media Office, preliminary direct losses across 15 vital sectors totaled $70 billion.[24]

Since the onset of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, Hamas has lost thousands of its members, including numerous senior political and military leaders. Among the top-tier leadership killed were the head of the political bureau, Isma'il Haniyyah, followed by Yahya Sinwar; the deputy head, Saleh al-'Aruri; and bureau member Rawhi Mushtaha, along with a large number of other senior political figures. On the military side, the commander of Al-Qassam Brigades Muhammad Daif, succeeded by Muhammad Sinwar, the deputy commander Marwan 'Isa, the spokesperson Abu 'Ubaida (Huthaifah al-Kahlut), and multiple brigade commanders were also among those killed.

The scope of assassinations expanded beyond Palestine, beginning with attempts on Haniyyah in Tehran and al-'Aruri in Beirut, alongside al-Qassam Brigades leaders Samir Fendi and 'Azzam al-Aqra'. Lebanon witnessed numerous killings of movement members and its political and military leaders, notably the movement's commander in Lebanon and a member of Hamas leadership abroad, Fatah Sharif (aka Abu al-Amin). Israel also attempted a major assassination by striking a meeting of Hamas leaders in Doha on 9/9/2025, during discussions of a US proposal to end the war; the attempt, however, failed.

Significant numbers of cadres from the PIJ, PFLP, and other resistance factions were also killed. Among the most prominent were members of the military council of al-Quds Brigades, the PIJ military wing, including Muhammad Abu Sakhil, Hasan al-Na'im, Riad Hashish, Yusuf Nabhan, Marzuq al-Sha'ir, Mahmud Abu Shammala, and the military spokesperson Abu Hamza (Naji Abu Saif), along with several central council members and numerous other PIJ cadres, who fell in GS or Lebanon.

In the same context, the Palestinian Freedom (al-Ahrar) Movement announced the death of its Secretary-General, Khalid Abu Hilal, at the onset of Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Similarly, the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, the armed wing of the PFLP, reported the killing of Muhammad ʻAbdu ʻAl (Abu Ghazi), political bureau member and head of the military-security department; Imad Odeh (Abu Ziad), member of the PFLP General Central Committee, member of its military department and its military commander in Lebanon; and several other PFLP members and cadres killed in GS or Lebanon.

Furthermore, the Popular Resistance Committees in Palestine reported the death of Ahmad Kamel Sarhan, field commander and head of the Special Operations Unit of the al-Nasser Salah al-Din Brigades, during an armed clash with an Israeli special forces unit that raided his home in Khan Yunis.

3. Israeli Human and Material Losses

Official Israeli data and reports from research centers indicate a heavy toll in both human and economic losses, the largest in decades, resulting from military operations across multiple fronts. On 6/10/2025, the Israeli Ministry of Defense reported that 1,152 personnel had been killed since 7/10/2023, including 487 under the age of 21 and 141 over the age of 40. These figures include soldiers, police personnel, members of the Israel Security Agency—ISA (*Shabak*), special operations forces, and members of local emergency response teams who took part in fighting in GS, the south, the north, Lebanon and WB. According to military data, 6,313 military personnel have been wounded since the beginning of the war, including 2,952 during the ground battles that began in GS on 27/10/2023. Nevertheless, an INSS report suggested that the total number of wounded military personnel may reach as high as 20 thousand.[25]

Data from the National Insurance Institute of Israel (NII) indicate that the war resulted in the deaths of 978 civilians, including 84 foreigners. Notably, 7/10/2023 alone accounted for 778 civilian deaths, among them 70 foreigners, while a further 200 civilians, including 14 foreigners, were killed during the subsequent war. Regarding the injured, NII reported that it has treated more than 80 thousand individuals since 7/10/2023, including 24 amputees. In addition, 36,315 civilians applied for disability recognition due to what were classified as “hostile acts.” Of these applications, 33,983 were approved, including 30,462 psychological cases,

1,592 physical cases, and 1,929 cases involving both psychological and physical injuries. According to INSS, fatalities were distributed as follows:[26]

- 1,721 killed, including 870 soldiers, on the GS front.
- 78 killed, including 31 soldiers, in the WB.
- 33 killed during the war with Iran.
- 132 killed, including 86 soldiers, as a result of attacks from Lebanon.
- One killed and 100 injured due to attacks from Yemen.

Israel imposes strict military censorship on its media concerning human and material losses for several reasons, particularly following Operation al-Aqsa Flood, most notably to maintain Israeli public morale. Accordingly, Israel has sought to restrict the dissemination of sensitive information through intensified military oversight. Military censors have been stationed directly in news studios to monitor "media violations," while also closely tracking social media platforms.[27]

Reports indicate that the number of Israeli fatalities is considerably higher than what the Israeli leadership has officially disclosed. In this regard, *Haaretz* revealed a significant discrepancy between the number of wounded soldiers reported by the Israeli army and the figures recorded in hospital registers. Moreover, at the beginning of the war, military censorship compelled *Yedioth Ahronoth* to revise the reported number of wounded personnel in the Israeli occupation army from 5 thousand to only 2 thousand.[28] Further indications emerged from statements by Israeli Chief of General Staff Eyal Zamir, who disclosed on 4/2/2025 that 5,942 new Israeli families had been added to the list of bereaved families during 2024, while more than 15 thousand injured individuals had entered the rehabilitation system. These figures stand in sharp contrast to earlier statistics suggesting that the total number of fatalities since Operation al-Aqsa Flood was only 1,800, including about 900 soldiers.[29]

NII reported that the war displaced about 164,500 Israelis from their homes, approximately 85% of whom later returned. Of these, 74,600 were displaced from settlements surrounding GS, with about 90% eventually returning, while 68,500 were displaced from settlements near the Lebanese border. In addition, about 21 thousand left their homes across various parts of Israel following Iranian attacks.[30]

Moreover, the Israeli economy incurred substantial losses, while reverse migration increased (see "Israeli Demographic and Economic Conditions," Chapter Five: The Israeli Scene, in this report).

In addition, 119 thousand Israelis submitted compensation claims for property damage, including 44 thousand claims resulting from Iranian missiles and 27 thousand from rockets launched from Lebanon. According to INSS, since the beginning of the war Israel has been subjected to approximately 37,500 rockets fired from multiple fronts, distributed as follows:[31]

- 17,300 rockets and 593 drones from Lebanon.
- 10,200 rockets and 51 drones from GS.
- 950 missiles and about 1,380 drones from Iran.
- 500 missiles from Yemen.
- 45 missiles from Syria.

Second: Israeli Aggression and Palestinian Resistance in the WB

In 2024 and 2025, the WB experienced an unprecedented escalation following Operation al-Aqsa Flood, marked by daily incursions, targeted assassinations, mass arrests, and the destruction of infrastructure in RCs, alongside intensifying settler attacks. The aggression manifested in repeated raids on cities and RCs, particularly in Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm. However, despite security coordination between the PA and the Israeli army, both individual and organized operations increased, while daily confrontations and popular resistance persisted. The WB saw a significant rise in these activities amid thousands of casualties and detainees, severe movement restrictions, and repeated lockdowns of neighborhoods and cities.

Following 7/10/2023, Israel swiftly imposed a comprehensive closure on the WB, isolating cities from one another through military checkpoints. Simultaneously, it allowed settler militias to operate freely, spreading fear in contact areas out of concern that an uprising might erupt.[32] Meanwhile, the PA sought to suppress any signs of escalation or popular mobilization, closed universities, and continued its security coordination with Israel.

The years 2024 and 2025 recorded the highest rate of Israeli violations against Palestinians in WB, including East Jerusalem, compared with the preceding five years, reflecting a marked escalation in the brutality of the Israeli occupation and the persistence of its aggressive policies toward Palestinians. The Palestine Information Center—Mo3ta documented 53,052 violations in 2024 and 81,887 in 2025, encompassing a broad range of crimes committed by Israeli occupation forces and settlers. These included killings, expulsions, arrests, and home demolitions, in addition to land leveling, property confiscation, and attacks targeting the education and health sectors, in clear breach of international conventions and treaties.[33] Moreover, Israeli occupation forces continued installing iron gates across the WB, including East Jerusalem, as part of a policy aimed at tightening restrictions on Palestinians and effectively besieging their communities. By 18/9/2025, the total number of permanent and flying checkpoints, iron gates, earth mounds and concrete blocks had reached about 909 barriers. Of these, 82 checkpoints and gates were installed since the beginning of 2025, while about 247 had been established after 7/10/2023.[34]

In recent years, particularly since 7/10/2023, there has been a sharp increase in both the frequency and severity of settler violence against Palestinians in the WB, including East Jerusalem. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Media Observatory for Israeli Crimes Against Palestinians documented 10,439 such attacks between 2020 and 2025, reflecting an average annual increase of 36%.[35]

Furthermore, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that 2024 and 2025 recorded the highest levels of Israeli settler violence in the WB, including East Jerusalem, since documentation began nearly two decades ago. According to OCHA, settlers were involved in 1,420 incidents in 2024 and 1,800 in 2025. These incidents included physical assaults, arson attacks, raids on Palestinian communities, as well as the destruction of property and vandalizing trees, etc. Reports also indicate that settlers killed five Palestinians in 2024 and nine in 2025, while injuring 360 Palestinians in 2024 and 838 in 2025.[36] Similarly, Mo3ta documented 2,477 settler attacks in 2024 and 4,441 in 2025.[37]

1. Resistance Operations and Escalation in WB

The pace of resistance operations remained consistently high throughout 2024 compared to the period prior to Operation al-Aqsa Flood. However, they declined

in 2025, primarily due to the escalation of Israeli repression, intensified campaigns of destruction and arrests, the continued security coordination of the PA with Israel, and the sustained state of exhaustion across the WB. In 2024, the Shabak recorded about 5,766 attacks in WB, including East Jerusalem and the 1948 occupied territories, killing 45 and wounding 339, while in 2025, this figure declined slightly to 4,744, killing 23 and wounding 195, excluding Palestinian resistance activities in GS during Operation al-Aqsa Flood. It should be noted, however, that most of the attacks recorded in WB consisted of confrontations, stone-throwing, Molotov cocktail attacks, and similar acts. The Shabak reported 267 significant attacks (shootings, bombings, stabbings and vehicular attacks…) in 2024 and 69 significant attacks in 2025, further noting that it foiled 1,051 significant attacks in 2024 and 1,374 significant attacks in 2025.[38] This reflects an increase in resistance activity within a complex and challenging security environment, where such activities have been systematically monitored and countered over many years, with coordination between the PA and Israel.

Table 1/4: Distribution of Resistance Operations in WB and the 1948 Occupied Territories 2024–2025, per Shabak[39]

Year	Resistance Operations	Significant attacks	Popular Operations	Foiled Significant Attacks
2024	5,766	267	5,499	1,051
2025	4,744	69	4,675	1,374
Total	**10,510**	**336**	**10,174**	**2,425**

Table 2/4: Distribution of Significant Attacks of Resistance Operations in WB and the 1948 Occupied Territories 2024–2025, per Shabak[40]

Year	WB (excl. Jerusalem)	East Jerusalem	1948 Occupied Territories	Total
2024	218	8	41	**267**
2025	54	2	13	**69**
Total	**272**	**10**	**54**	**336**

The annual reports of the Palestine Information Center—Mo3ta have noted that the popular and armed Palestinian resistance in WB, including East Jerusalem, has significantly increased both quantitatively and qualitatively. In 2024, Palestinians carried out 5,893 resistance operations in WB, including East Jerusalem, among which 2,071 were significant attacks. The report indicates that the governorates of Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm experienced the highest concentration of significant resistance operations, particularly shootings, with 760, 435, and 289 incidents, respectively. In 2024, resistance activities were documented across the WB and East Jerusalem, with the largest numbers recorded in Nablus 1,402, Jenin 1,094, Ramallah 618, Hebron 543, and Tulkarm 524. These operations reportedly resulted in 48 Israeli fatalities and 386 injuries.[41]

During 2025, Palestinians carried out 4,081 acts of resistance across the WB, including East Jerusalem, of which 695 were classified as significant (armed) attacks. According to the report, the governorates of Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm recorded the highest number of significant resistance activities, particularly shooting attacks, at 291, 134 and 57 respectively. More broadly, resistance activities were distributed across the WB and East Jerusalem throughout 2025, with the highest numbers recorded in Nablus 1,049, followed by Ramallah 686, Jenin 565, Hebron 456, and Jerusalem 322. As a result of these operations, 26 Israelis were killed and 226 others injured.[42]

Table 3/4: Development of Resistance Action in WB and the 1948 Occupied Territories 2022–2025[43]

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025
Popular Resistance Actions*	10,808	10,925	3,822	3,386
Significant Attacks**	1,380	3,258	2,071	695
Total	**12,188**	**14,183**	**5,893**	**4,081**

* Includes clashes, stone throwing, Molotov cocktails, strikes, protests, etc.

** Includes shooting, stabbing and run-over...

Table 4/4: Development of Signifcant Attacks in WB and the 1948 Occupied Territories by Type 2022–2025[44]

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025
Shooting	848	2,053	1,143	221
Stabbing or attempted stabbing	37	46	31	18
Vehicular assault or attempted vehicular assault	18	25	21	18
Improvised explosive device (IED) deploymentor dropping	222	653	723	318
Arson targeting military facilities, vehicles and posts	65	109	20	4
Destruction of military vehicles and equipment	187	336	117	114
Drone Downing	2	26	12	1
Twin bombings	1	-	2	1
Rocket launches	-	10	-	-
Self-immolation/ Self-sacrificial attacks	-	-	2	-
Total	**1,380**	**3,258**	**2,071**	**695**

2. Operation Iron Wall

In response to the escalation of resistance operations, Israel launched a large-scale military campaign targeting RCs in the northern WB. The campaign began in Jenin RC on 21/1/2025, followed by Tulkarm RC on 27/1/2025 and Tubas on 2/2/2025. Israel designated it Operation Iron Wall, the largest and most violent military operation since Operation Defensive Shield in 2002. The operation resulted in extensive destruction, dozens of casualties and injuries, and the displacement of more than 51 thousand Palestinians after their homes were demolished by dozens of military vehicles equipped with advanced weaponry and surveillance technologies.

Following the forced evacuation of residents, Israel converted many houses into military barracks and positioned snipers on the rooftops of surrounding buildings. At the same time, Israeli forces systematically destroyed infrastructure in the areas

they entered, cutting electricity and water supplies and carrying out extensive bulldozing of streets. Neighborhoods were further fragmented through checkpoints and earthen barriers, while Israeli forces breached through houses to facilitate safer movement for soldiers. In addition, Israel restricted medical and food supplies to residents, allowing ambulances to move only with prior coordination, obstructing and assaulting medical crews, and besieging hospitals. It also prevented funeral processions for the dead whose bodies continued to arrive at hospital morgues, disrupted civilian communications, and completely paralyzed economic life in the areas of incursion.[45]

Jenin has remained a central flashpoint of confrontation with Israel. From the outset of Operation al-Aqsa Flood until 28/1/2025, the city and its RC constituted the primary front in WB, witnessing dozens of armed clashes and targeted resistance operations. According to Mo3ta Center, Jenin recorded 1,871 organized and popular resistance actions during this period, resulting in three Israeli deaths and 85 injuries. Within Jenin and its RC, 254 were killed out of 913 across WB, while the number of wounded in the governorate reached 683. Jenin and its RC also recorded the highest number of armed confrontations with Israel among WB cities, totaling 739 incidents, or 35% of all such operations across the WB. Resistance there involved specialized armed actions and a significant development in the use of high-explosive devices, with 490 explosives planted and detonated against Israeli forces. Concurrently, popular resistance persisted through demonstrations, marches and stone-throwing, totaling 594 incidents over the year. The Mo3ta Center documented 434 clashes and stone-throwing incidents targeting Israeli forces and settlers, alongside 155 demonstrations and marches.[46]

3. Killed and Wounded in WB

According to Mo3ta Center, since Operation al-Aqsa Flood until the end of 2025, the total number of fatalities in the WB reached 1,136, with 8,861 injured. Between the onset of the operation and the end of 2023, 332 Palestinians were killed, 3,529 were injured, and 5,233 were arrested.[47] In 2024, 534 Palestinians were killed by Israel and settlers, including 80 children, 21 women and 23 elderly individuals, while 2,508 were injured. Jenin Governorate recorded the highest number of fatalities that year, with 151 killed, followed by Tulkarm and Nablus Governorates with 141 and 58, respectively.[48] In 2025, 270 Palestinians were

killed, including 56 children, 8 women, and 19 elderly, and 2,795 were injured. As in 2024, Jenin had the highest number of fatalities in 2025, with 87, followed by Nablus, Tubas and Hebron Governorates, with 45, 30, and 30, respectively.[49] PCBS reported that escalating Israeli military operations and settler violence in the WB resulted in the killing of 1,102 Palestinians and the injury of 9,034 others from the onest of Operation al-Aqsa Flood until the end of 2025. More specifically, 319 Palestinians were killed in the WB from the onset of Operation al-Aqsa Flood until the end of 2023;[50] this figure rose to 516 in 2024,[51] before declining to 267 in 2025.[52]

Table 5/4: Palestinians Killed and Missing Persons in WB and GS, Since 7/10/2023 Until the End of 2025[53]

Year	Since 7/10/2023	2024	2025	Total
WB	332	534	270	**1,136**
GS	21,822	23,662	25,458	**70,942**
Missing Persons from GS				**11,000**
Total	**22,154**	**24,196**	**25,728**	**83,078**

As for the Shabak, it reported 45 Israeli fatalities in 2024 and 23 in 2025 from Palestinian operations in the WB, including East Jerusalem, and within the 1948 occupied territories. Injuries declined from 339 in 2024 to 195 in 2025.[54]

Table 6/4: The Killed and Wounded Among Palestinians and Israelis in WB and GS 2024–2025

Year	Killed		Wounded	
	Palestinians	Israelis	Palestinians	Israelis
2024	534	45	2,508	339
2025	270	23	2,795	195
Total	**804**	**68**	**5,303**	**534**

4. Prisoners and Detainees

In 2024 and 2025, Israel's patterns of arrest underwent notable developments, closely tied to the intensification of resistance against the occupation. Systematic detentions have long constituted a consistent policy through which Israel seeks to weaken resistance movements that might further the Palestinian pursuit of self-determination and freedom.

As of 14/12/2024, about 10,300 Palestinian prisoners are held in Israeli prisons, excluding those from GS detained following Operation al-Aqsa Flood and those in Israel's military camps. Among the prisoners are 89 women, 345 children and five PLC members. Of the total, 10,100 are from the WB, including 300 from East Jerusalem, while 200 are Palestinians from the 1948 occupied territories, alongside dozens of Arab detainees from other countries (see table 7/4). Notably, 3,428 are classified as administrative detainees (see table 8/4).

The number of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons reached about 9,250 as of 5/11/2025. This figure excludes prisoners from GS after 7/10/2023, as well as those in Israel's military camps. Among them are 49 women, 350 children and six PLC members. Of the total, 9,050 are from the WB, including 400 from East Jerusalem; in addition, about 200 are Palestinians from the 1948 occupied territories, alongside dozens of Arab detainees from other countries (see table 7/4). Moreover, 3,368 are classified as administrative detainees (see table 8/4).

Table 7/4: Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Prisons 2021–2025[55]

Year	Total no. of detainees	WB	GS	Serving life sentences	Women	Children
2021	4,550	4,250	230	544	32	170
2022	4,700	4,400	200	551	34	150
2023	9,000*	8,520	280*	561	70	200
2024	10,300*	10,100	–	561	89	345
2025	9,250*	9,050	–	113	49	350

* Excluding GS detainees after 7/10/2023.

Table 8/4: Administrative Detainees 2021–2025[56]

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Administrative detainees	500	835	2,070	3,428	3,368

The two years covered by the report witnessed the highest levels of targeting of Palestinians in GS and WB, including East Jerusalem. Palestinians in these areas are subjected to a discriminatory military judicial system that criminalizes aspects of daily life and imposes harsh penalties even for minor infractions. Furthermore, the ongoing arrest campaigns have been accompanied by escalating violations and abuses, including severe beatings, threats against detainees and their families, and widespread destruction of civilians' homes. These measures have also involved the confiscation of vehicles, money, and gold jewelry, as well as large-scale damage to infrastructure. In addition, Israel has demolished homes belonging to detainees' families, taken relatives as hostages, and used detainees as human shields.

Furthermore, 2024 and 2025 were among the deadliest years for Palestinian detainees. According to Palestinian prisoner institutions (Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs (CDA), the Palestinian Prisoner's Society (PPS), and the Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association—Addameer), 86 detainees whose identities have been confirmed died in Israeli custody. This total includes 11 deaths from the beginning of Operation al-Aqsa Flood until the end of 2023, 43 in 2024, and 32 in 2025. Meanwhile, dozens of detainees from GS remain forcibly disappeared, while Israel continues to withhold the bodies of 94 detainees, including 83 since the genocide.

Arrest campaigns escalated to an unprecedented level with the onset of the genocide and the accompanying comprehensive war. Since 7/10/2023, specialized institutions have documented around 21 thousand arrests in the WB, including East Jerusalem, encompassing all segments of Palestinian society. These include 1,655 children and 650 women. Notably, this figure does not include arrests in GS, which have been estimated in the thousands since Operation al-Aqsa Flood, nor those carried out in the 1948 occupied territories, which are estimated in the hundreds. Particularly targeted groups include journalists, among whom 217 cases of arrest and detention have been recorded. Medical personnel have also been subjected to

unprecedented targeting, especially in GS, where more than 360 individuals have reportedly been detained.

During 2025, Palestinian prisoner institutions documented more than 7 thousand arrests, including 600 children and 200 women, in addition to field interrogations targeting thousands. By comparison, arrest campaigns in 2024 exceeded 8,800 cases, including 700 children and 266 women. These figures exclude arrests in GS, which are estimated to number in the thousands. Notably, arrest campaigns largely targeted previously released prisoners and individuals who had been previously detained and released without charge. Furthermore, since the start of the GS war, more than 20 thousand administrative detention orders, both new and renewed, have been issued, including orders against children and women.[57]

In 2024 and 2025, Israel's legislative system experienced an unprecedented intensification, with the Knesset enacting a broad package of laws and amendments that systematically entrenched the apartheid framework and strengthened mechanisms of control over the Palestinian population, particularly prisoners and detainees. The Israeli war on GS was used as a political and legal pretext to expedite over thirty punitive laws, bringing the total number of discriminatory Israeli laws to nearly one hundred, demonstrating the structural and systematic character of this legislative agenda.

These measures undermined fundamental rights, including freedom of expression, association and protest, as well as citizenship, family life, equality and socio-economic rights. At the same time, the detention and "punishment" system was significantly tightened through amendments to prison regulations, allowing the declaration of a "detention emergency," or Prison Emergency Law, thereby legitimizing harsh and inhumane confinement while granting prison authorities exceptional powers that exceed international standards for prisoner treatment.[58]

Similarly, new laws permit the revocation of citizenship or residency, the imposition of house arrest, and the suspension of social benefits, as well as the deportation or punishment of detainees' relatives. They further expand the detention of children, extend confinement periods, and restrict judicial oversight of administrative detention orders.[59]

In 2024, the Knesset focused on approving or introducing a series of laws targeting the economic life of Palestinians in general, and prisoners and their

families in particular. Among the most notable initiatives was a bill allowing individuals harmed by acts of Palestinian "resistance," defined under Israeli law as "terrorism," to file compensation claims against entities alleged to support such actions, including the PA. Furthermore, the Knesset discussed a bill proposing sanctions against financial institutions operating in the WB and GS that maintain relations with financial institutions inside Israel, such as banks, if they are found to have transferred PA funds to individuals classified by Israel as "terrorists," namely released prisoners and the families of those killed. In addition, two bills were introduced "enabling the Israeli government to withhold funds from Palestinian tax revenues to pay for the medical care of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli detention." Moreover, on 11/10/2024, a law was finally approved "mandating that funds be deducted from the Palestinian tax revenues held by the Israeli government to finance Israeli defense attorneys appointed by the court…to represent Palestinian prisoners involved" in the 7/10/2023 attacks, despite the refusal of Palestinian lawyers and organizations "to defend these prisoners, citing the illegality of their detention."[60]

In this context, on 10/11/2025, the Knesset approved at first reading a bill stipulating the death penalty for Palestinians, which allows the execution of anyone who "intentionally or negligently causes the death of an 'Israeli' citizen for racial or hostile motives." Additional legislation criminalizes denial or "glorification" of the events of 7/10/2023, significantly expands police powers in cases of "incitement" with "minimal oversight, and prolonged remote trial procedures."[61] On 30/3/2026, the Knesset adopted the law in its final reading, securing 62 votes in favor, 48 against, and one abstention.[62]

Meanwhile, detainees from GS following the genocide "were subjected to exceptional laws classifying them as 'illegal combatants,' allowing prolonged detention, restricting lawyer access, and reducing judicial oversight." Emergency regulations governing arrests and interrogations "were extended through early 2026, enabling prolonged detention without formal charges."[63]

In a related development, the US "has not only continued supporting the occupation's genocide, but has also targeted Palestinian human rights institutions." It has designated "Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association as a 'terrorist organization' and imposed sanctions on it and several other institutions, including Al-Haq, Al-Mezan, and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights."[64]

5. Prisoner Exchange Deals

Prisoner exchanges have been a pivotal aspect of the Palestinian detainee issue, not only regarding the numbers released but also the coercive conditions attached and their lasting effects on the freed individuals. These exchanges occurred within a complex political and security context, with releases serving as bargaining tools rather than legal or humanitarian obligations. Following a brief seven-day humanitarian ceasefire (23–30/11/2023), 240 Palestinian detainees (75 women and 165 minors) were released, while Palestinian resistance secured the release of 80 Israeli detainees (44 women and 36 minors) and 27 foreign nationals.[65]

According to data compiled by prisoner organizations, a total of 3,745 Palestinian detainees were released in 2025 in two distinct phases. The first, between 20/1/2025 and 27/2/2025, involved 1,777 detainees, while the second, following the October 2025 ceasefire, included 1,968 detainees. These releases were carried out in exchange for all Israeli captives in GS, both living and deceased, through phased arrangements linked to political and security considerations rather than independent legal procedures or fair judicial review. Since the genocide began, the total number of detainees released under exchange agreements reached 3,985, including 383 who were forcibly expelled from Palestine.[66] These exchanges led to the release of 535 individuals sentenced to life imprisonment or long terms, 2,718 GS detainees arrested after the war, and 13 detainees who had been held since before the Oslo Accords.[67]

These figures do not signify the resolution of the detention issue; rather, they reflect the growing reliance on prisoner exchanges as a mechanism for managing detention, particularly as large-scale arrest campaigns continue alongside releases. Prisoner rights organizations have documented the re-arrest of dozens of released detainees within weeks or months of their release; some were detained immediately or placed under administrative detention without charge or trial, constituting a recurring retaliatory practice that undermines the legal and humanitarian significance of release. Moreover, several exchange deals were accompanied by forced exile, either outside the country or to areas within the Palestinian territories other than the detainees' places of residence.[68]

Third: Lebanese Resistance and Israeli War on Lebanon

From the outset of the Israeli war on GS, the Lebanese front acted as an effective support line, imposing significant strategic costs on Israel. The Lebanese resistance—primarily Hizbullah, alongside the Fajr Forces the military wing of al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah, and select Palestinian factions, including Hamas and PIJ—managed escalation carefully, gradually expanding its targets while maintaining a balance that avoided full-scale war and sustained pressure on Israel's northern front. Until the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement on 27/11/2024, the Lebanese resistance executed precise operations against Israeli military sites, command centers and surveillance systems, causing widespread disruption in northern settlements. In turn, Israel responded with airstrikes, artillery bombardments, targeted assassinations and the destruction of border villages.

Nevertheless, this support front underwent profound and dramatic transformations, progressing through several violent phases that fundamentally altered its character. Following the launch of Operation Northern Arrows on 23/9/2024[69] and the announcement of a "limited, targeted" ground operation against Hizbullah positions near the southern border on 1/10/2024,[70] the front shifted from a largely restrained engagement zone—operating under rules of engagement established since the 2006 July Lebanon War—into a theater of direct confrontation and open warfare with Israel. As a result, the Lebanese front became a principal theater for Israel. In his first address as Hizbullah's Secretary-General on 30/10/2024, Sheikh Naim Qassem designated this war the Battle of Mighty Warriors against Israel.[71]

The support front was characterized by strikes on critical segments of the party's communications network and command-and-control systems, targeting operational capacities and senior leadership, including Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah, Executive Council head Hashim Safieddine, Chief of General Staff Fuad Shukr, among numerous other leaders and members.[72]

Israel intensified its policy of targeted assassinations against Hizbullah's political and military leadership, beginning with the killing of the party's Central Training Unit head, Wisam al-Tawil, on 8/1/2024. This campaign culminated in the assassination of senior military official Fuad Shukr on 30/7/2024, following

Israel's accusation that Hizbullah was responsible for a rocket strike on 27/7/2024 at a football field in Majdal Shams in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, which killed 12 and wounded dozens, an accusation Hizbullah denied. In retaliation, Hizbullah launched 320 rockets and several drones on 25/8/2024. Nasrallah "specified that the main focus of Hezbollah's attack was the Glilot base north of Tel Aviv, which is home to the Mossad, an Israeli intelligence service, and the military intelligence group Unit 8200."[73]

Tensions in Lebanon intensified as Israel renewed its targeted operations against Hizbullah personnel. On 17/9/2024, thousands of pagers in the possession of members across various Hizbullah units detonated, followed the next day by the explosion of walkie-talkies held by additional operatives, collectively resulting in 37 fatalities and over 3 thousand injuries.[74] Nasrallah characterized the attacks as "a major security and humanitarian blow, unprecedented in the history of our resistance, and perhaps in the broader conflict with the enemy." Subsequently, on 20/9/2024, Israeli aircraft struck the Jamous neighborhood in southern Beirut, assassinating Ibrahim Aqil, a principal architect of Hizbullah's Al-Radwan Force, along with 37 others, including Ahmad Mahmud Wehbe, who had assumed leadership of the Central Training Unit following the killing of Wisam al-Tawil.[75] Moreover, Israel assassinated Hizbullah Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah on 27/9/2024; it then initiated a ground incursion into southern Lebanon on 1/10/2024. However, the advance was met with strong resistance from Hizbullah and other resistance forces.

Operation Northern Arrows represented Israel's most intense assault on Lebanon since 2006, systematically targeting Hizbullah's political and military infrastructure. The offensive struck senior and mid-level leadership, weapons depots, and missile launch sites, and included a ground incursion into southern Lebanon. The campaign resulted in approximately 4 thousand Lebanese killed, 17 thousand wounded, and over 1.2 million displaced.[76] According to INSS, Hizbullah lost 2,450 personnel by the ceasefire on 27/11/2024.[77] During the two-month operation, the Israeli military reported over 12,500 targeted strikes, including 360 in Beirut, alongside more than 100 special operations.[78] Investigations by *The New York Times* revealed extensive Mossad infiltration of Hizbullah, with operatives planting listening devices in Hizbullah bunkers,

monitoring meetings, and maintaining near constant visibility over the movements of its leadership, including Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah.[79]

The British newspaper *The Independent*, citing Israeli sources, reported that more than 12 thousand rockets were launched at Israel from Lebanon between 8/10/2023 and 27/11/2024.[80] Meanwhile, the Shabak recorded the launch of 20,103 rockets from the Lebanese and Syrian fronts during 2024–2025.[81] In parallel, Hizbullah carried out more than 4,637 publicly announced military operations (an average of about 11 per day) between 8/10/2023 and 27/11/2024, of which 1,666 took place during the two months of the Israeli war on Lebanon.[82]

It appears that Israel found it advantageous to reach a ceasefire agreement with Lebanon in order to ease the burden on the Israeli military and economy, facilitate the return of settlers to the north, and prevent Hizbullah from re-establishing its influence and military capabilities in southern Lebanon following Israel's withdrawal.[83] Accordingly, on 27/11/2024 a cessation of hostilities agreement between Hizbullah and Israel entered into force, which was reached through US and French mediation. US President Joe Biden announced the agreement, stating that it aimed to bring about a permanent cessation of military operations. It was subsequently approved by the Israeli security cabinet as well as by the leadership of Hizbullah. The agreement stipulates that "Israel will not carry out any offensive military operations against Lebanese targets, including civilian, military, or other state targets, in the territory of Lebanon by land, air, or sea." In parallel, "the Government of Lebanon will prevent Hezbollah and all other armed groups in the territory of Lebanon from carrying out any operations against Israel." Furthermore, the "Israel will withdraw its forces in a phased manner south of the Blue Line," completing its withdrawal within 60 days. Hizbullah, for its part, is to redeploy north of the Litani River, while the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) will deploy 10 thousand soldiers south of the river, including at 33 positions along the border with Palestine.[84]

However, on 24/1/2025, Israel announced that its army would not withdraw from the five positions it controls in southern Lebanon.[85] In response, the Lebanese government approved a plan to restrict arms to the state's security forces. LAF subsequently implemented the first phase of the plan, deploying across most areas south of the Litani River. Israel, however, deemed these measures insufficient,

asserting that Hizbullah was rebuilding its capabilities. Amid mounting criticism regarding the army's seriousness in limiting Hizbullah's weapons south of the Litani, the army command organized a media tour of the south on 28/11/2025. During the visit, it reported that since the launch of the "Homeland Shield" plan, aimed at ensuring the state's monopoly over arms, the army had dealt with 177 tunnels, closed 11 crossings along the Litani River, and seized 566 rocket launchers. It further indicated that 10 thousand soldiers had been deployed south of the Litani despite existing obstacles, supported by 200 army positions and 20 checkpoints.[86]

More than a year after the ceasefire, the war has effectively not ended, as Israel continues its daily attacks on Lebanon. At the same time, the prospect of renewed large-scale escalation remains significant, particularly as Israel has disregarded the ceasefire agreement, despite Hizbullah's adherence to it, while its violations have exceeded 10 thousand (This assessment was confirmed while the report was being finalized, as Israel launched a wide-scale offensive against Lebanon in March 2026). Furthermore, Israel's army has taken control of five locations inside Lebanese territory and has established two buffer zones, thereby preventing not only the full deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces but also the return of thousands of displaced residents to villages near the Blue Line (Moreover, Israel has expanded its control, effectively establishing a border strip during its March 2026 offensive).

On 9/12/2025, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) reported almost 7,800 air violations, more than one thousand trajectories crossing the Blue Line (with almost all of them originating from the Israeli side), over 100 air attacks, and over 2,500 Israeli ground violations north of the Blue Line inside Lebanese territory. UNIFIL also reported discovering more than 360 illegal weapons and ammunition caches, which were subsequently referred to LAF.[87] Meanwhile, the Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC) of Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health released casualty figures resulting from Israeli attacks following the cessation of hostilities agreement between 28/11/2024 and 27/11/2025. The report recorded 335 fatalities and 973 injuries, including members of Hizbullah and other Lebanese and Palestinian resistance factions.[88]

There are no definitive figures yet on the full extent of damage in Lebanon caused by the Israeli war. The south, in particular, has never experienced destruction of

this magnitude, nor have towns ever been entirely destroyed as in this war. Border areas from Naqoura to Shebaa suffered systematic damage from Israeli airstrikes and explosions, continuing even after the ceasefire, with destruction in some towns reaching 70%. According to Hashim Haidar, head of the Council of the South, 55 thousand units in the South and Western Beqaa were completely destroyed, while 180 thousand additional residential and non-residential units were damaged, totaling 235 thousand units at an estimated cost of $5 billion. The assault also burned over 6 thousand olive trees, including 4,700 ancient olive trees, according to the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture.[89] Lebanese Environment Minister Nasser Yassin reported that Israel's deliberate use of white phosphorus destroyed more than 5,745 hectares of land and forest in southern Lebanon, leaving over 52 towns and villages uninhabitable.[90]

A World Bank report estimates Lebanon's reconstruction and recovery needs at $11 billion, based on an assessment of damages and sectoral requirements across ten sectors between 8/10/2023 and 20/12/2024. The report indicates that the public sector will need to provide $3–5 billion, including $1 billion for infrastructure, while private sector financing of $6–8 billion will be largely directed to housing, commerce, industry and tourism. Overall, the economic cost of the aggression is estimated at $14 billion, comprising $6.8 billion in damages of physical assets and $7.2 billion in losses from reduced productivity, lost income and increased operational costs. Housing is the most affected sector, with damages of $4.6 billion, while commerce, industry and tourism account for $3.4 billion in losses. The conflict is further estimated to have contracted Lebanon's real GDP by 7.1% in 2024.[91]

In turn, Israel sustained substantial military and economic losses. Israeli sources report 118 killed from Hizbullah strikes, including 45 civilians and 73 soldiers. Authorities estimate property damage at over one billion shekels (about $273 million), with thousands of homes, farms and businesses damaged or destroyed. The heaviest impact occurred along the Lebanese border, subjected to intense rocket fire by Hizbullah, while about 55 thousand acres of forests, nature reserves, gardens, and open land in northern Israel and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights were destroyed. This damage severely disrupted tourism and industrial activity.[92]

Fourth: Yemeni Resistance Operations

Yemen entered the GS war as a strategic, long-range support front for the Palestinian resistance, representing a qualitative shift by extending the confrontation into the heart of Israeli interests and those of its allies. Forces aligned with the Caretaker Government of the Ansar Allah (Houthi) Movement conducted missile and naval operations against Israel and disrupted maritime routes linked to Israel in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab Strait, causing major disturbances to international shipping, raising maritime shipping costs, and forcing global companies to alter their routes. Despite Western and Israeli strikes, Yemen maintained its operational role, demonstrating resilience and the capacity to counterbalance the technological superiority of its adversaries. This development represented a qualitative evolution in the military geography of the conflict. The Yemeni factor redefined the concept of strategic support and showed that the theater of confrontation is no longer confined to Palestine's immediate geographic vicinity. Yemen's performance thus established its front as a regional actor in the deterrence calculus surrounding the Palestine issue.

Since 14/11/2023, when Ansar Allah (the Houthis) in Yemen decided to intervene in support of the Palestinian people in GS, the group has carried out 2,155 attacks using ballistic, cruise and hypersonic missiles, as well as drones and unmanned boats. These strikes targeted Israeli vessels, as well as ships of states supporting Israel, across the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandab Strait and the Gulf of Aden, in addition to ports, airports and military sites within Israeli territory. Over two years, 228 commercial ships were hit, effectively imposing a naval blockade on traffic bound for Israel.[93] Following the cessation of the hostilities on GS in October 2025, Yusuf al-Madani, chief of the Houthi General Staff, stated in a message to Al-Qassam Brigades that operations against Israel would resume should it recommence its genocide campaign in GS.[94]

An analysis by Al Jazeera's fact-checking agency, Sanad, indicates that Ansar Allah conducted 137 attacks on Israeli cities using hypersonic ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones between 31/10/2023 and 5/10/2025, averaging roughly one attack every five days. The frequency of attacks escalated markedly in 2025, with 87 incidents compared to 41 in 2024 and nine in 2023. September 2025 was

particularly intense, with strikes occurring approximately every two days, totaling 15 attacks.[95] These operations prompted the closure of Eilat port to maritime traffic on 20/7/2025, following the municipality's seizure of its bank accounts following non-payment of municipal taxes exceeding 600 thousand shekels (about $178,800) per month.[96]

In response, the US and its allies deployed a naval force to strike targets in Yemen, citing the protection of maritime navigation. Although this expanded the conflict geographically, it did not fully halt Yemeni attacks, which continued intermittently. In December 2023, the US, UK and other states launched Operation Prosperity Guardian to protect vessels targeted by the Houthis in the Red Sea. On 12/1/2024, President Joe Biden announced that the US and the UK had "successfully conducted strikes against a number of targets in Yemen used by Houthi rebels to endanger freedom of navigation," while eyewitnesses reported strikes on Yemeni cities. Targets were hit by fighter jets from the US navy, US air force and Royal Air Force, along with ship-launched Tomahawk cruise missiles. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak confirmed UK participation in the strikes, saying, "We have … taken limited, necessary and proportionate action in self-defence, alongside the United States against targets tied to these attacks, to degrade Houthi military capabilities and protect global shipping."[97]

These attacks continued until the beginning of the second ceasefire in GS in January 2025. However, they resumed on 16/3/2025, when the US launched a large-scale campaign of air and naval strikes against Yemen. According to media outlets affiliated with Ansar Allah, around 40 US airstrikes targeted the capital Sanaa, as well as Saada and al-Bayda, killing 32 people and injuring more than 100 others, most of them women and children.[98] The operations continued until 6/5/2025, when US President Donald Trump announced that the US would "stop the bombings" against Ansar Allah in Yemen.[99] The group confirmed the announcement but emphasized that Yemen's continued support for GS would persist. Ansar Allah spokesperson Muhammad 'Abdul Salam stated that the "preliminary understanding with the Americans has no relation to our position regarding support for Gaza."[100]

Meanwhile, US officials indicated that the campaign against Ansar Allah had cost the US more than $1 billion since March 2025, involving the use of thousands

of bombs and missiles, the downing of seven drones, and the loss of two fighter jets. Washington further stated that it had carried out one thousand strikes in Yemen, killing of 650 Houthi fighters. According to US assessments, the Houthis' capacity to launch ballistic missiles declined by 87%, while one-way drone attacks fell by 65%.[101]

Ansar Allah reported that Yemen conducted more than 131 operations using 253 ballistic, cruise and hypersonic missiles, in addition to drones, during that period. It also stated that the cost of the war exceeded $3 billion, excluding direct losses estimated at more than $1 billion. The group further noted that it carried out several notable operations, most prominently targeting Ben Gurion Airport and the Nevatim airbase. Meanwhile, it reported that the US and its allies conducted 1,712 airstrikes. These attacks resulted in the destruction of Sanaa International Airport, the temporary suspension of operations at Hudaydah Port, and the destruction of fuel storage and pumping facilities at the Ras Isa oil port in Hudaydah governorate. In addition, the Bajil Cement Factory in Hudaydah and the 'Amran Cement Factory in northern Yemen were destroyed. Approximately 280 civilians were reported killed across several Yemeni governorates, while hundreds more were injured.[102]

For its part, Israel launched 17 waves of airstrikes on Yemen between 20/7/2024 and 25/9/2025, with a pause during the second ceasefire in GS at the beginning of 2025. Over time, these attacks on the Houthis assumed an increasingly escalatory character, moving beyond defensive deterrence toward a broader strategy of destruction. In this context, Israel initiated aerial strikes against the Ansar Allah movement in Yemen as part of Operation Long Arm. The operation targeted government assets of strategic value, as well as military and security sites and residential neighborhoods. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that the attack on Yemen "makes it clear to our enemies that there is no place that the long arm of Israel will not reach," adding that the strikes were carried out in response to Houthis' aggression.[103] Notably, the targeted sites constitute key pillars of the Houthis' military, administrative and economic activity.[104]

One of the most notable Israeli operations against the Houthis occurred on 28/8/2025, when Israel launched a large-scale strike on Sanaa and other locations in Yemen. The Israeli military stated that its air force had carried out what it described

as a "precise strike" targeting a Houthi military site in the capital. Subsequently, on 30/8/2025, Ansar Allah announced that the Israeli strike had killed the prime minister of the government appointed by the group, Ahmad Ghalib al-Rahawi, along with several ministers. Among those killed on 28/8/2025 were Minister of Information and government spokesperson Hashim Sharaf Addin; Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriate Affairs Jamal 'Amer; Minister of Electricity, Energy, and Water 'Ali Saif Muhammad; and Minister of Justice and Human Rights Ahmad 'Abdullah 'Ali.[105]

On 10/9/2025, Israel carried out a large-scale attack on the Yemeni cities of Sanaa and al-Jawf, causing extensive damage to infrastructure and key facilities. According to the Ministry of Health affiliated with the Ansar Allah group in Yemen, the attack resulted in 35 fatalities and 131 injuries. Meanwhile, the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation reported that ten warplanes conducted the strike, dropping 30 bombs on 15 targets.[106]

Fifth: Israeli Aggression Against Iran

Since the onset of the Israeli war on GS, relations between Israel and Iran have undergone a measured escalation. Israel largely carried out limited strikes targeting Iranian interests and those of its allies, while Iran responded with calibrated actions aimed at maintaining deterrence without being drawn into a comprehensive war. This pattern reflected both sides' awareness of the risks of direct confrontation, even as the conflict remained contained within carefully managed rules of engagement. Moreover, the escalation involved a series of Israeli security and military strikes, most notably targeting leaders in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Iran-aligned factions in Syria and other countries. Consequently, the confrontation between Israel and Iran largely remained a "shadow war" until it expanded in June 2025.

At the outset of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, Tehran stressed that the attack was entirely Palestinian, executed solely by Palestinians without external assistance, while reaffirming its support for Palestinian resistance. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reiterated Iran's backing for Palestine and its resistance, adding, "those who say that non-Palestinians are behind what the Palestinians have done do not

know the Palestinian nation. They underestimate the Palestinian nation."[107] Major General Hossein Salami, Commander of the IRGC, described the operation as a response to 75 years of injustice.[108] Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian dismissed allegations of Tehran's direct involvement as "baseless claim," noting that Iran does not "want this war to spread out,"[109] though he cautioned that escalation could follow continued US support for Israel, emphasizing that such backing has intensified the war.[110]

In 2024, two major aerial confrontations took place between Israel and Iran. The first occurred in April after Israel bombed the Iranian consulate in Damascus on 1/4/2024, killing several IRGC commanders in Syria and Lebanon, most notably Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi and Brigadier General Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi, along with five accompanying officers.[111] In response, Iran launched Operation True Promise 1 on 13/4/2024, firing approximately 300 missiles and drones toward Israel. According to the IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami, the attack destroyed two key Israeli military sites. He further stated that the Iranian strike has concluded and there is no intention to continue it; however, the country will respond decisively if Israel targets its interests.[112]

The Israeli military reported having "thwarted" the Iranian attack, intercepting 99% of the drones and missiles and describing the outcome as a "major strategic achievement." According to its statement, Iran launched over 300 threats of various types, including more than 120 ballistic missiles, of which only 7 crossed the border, striking Nevatim airbase and causing minor damage. *The New York Times* cited Israeli officials stating that Iran had deployed 185 drones, 110 surface-to-surface missiles, and 36 cruise missiles. Channel 12 further noted that US and British fighter jets, together with French military assets, contributed to repelling the assault.[113]

The second confrontation occurred in October 2024, following Israel's assassination of Hamas Political Bureau Chief Isma'il Haniyyah in Tehran on 31/7/2024, after his participation in the Iranian presidential inauguration, as well as the assassinations of Hizbullah Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah and IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan on 27/9/2024 in Beirut's southern suburbs. In response, the IRGC launched Operation True Promise 2, firing over 200 rockets against Israeli military and security targets, reportedly achieving a 90% success

rate. Official Iranian television further reported that the operation marked the first use of the hypersonic Fattah-1 missile, aimed specifically at Israel's Arrow 2 and 3 missile defense systems.[114]

In response, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the strike on Israel "failed," and thanked the US for its support of Israel's defensive measures, stressing that Iran made a "big mistake tonight" and "it will pay for it."[115] The Israeli military acknowledged that the Iranian missile strike caused damage to its air bases but minimized its significance and withheld specific locations. The Cable News Network (CNN) reported that video analysis showed an Iranian missile detonating less than one kilometer from Mossad headquarters.[116] As in the initial wave, US and British fighter jets, alongside French military assets, contributed to repelling the Iranian assault,[117] while Jordanian authorities intercepted multiple missiles and drones that entered their airspace.[118]

Israel attempted to leverage Iran's response in the second confrontation to strike its nuclear program; however, US pressure, aimed at preventing a broader war, led Israel to limit the operation. On 4/10/2024, the Israeli Security cabinet authorized a retaliatory response,[119] which culminated on 26/10/2024 in a series of airstrikes. Within four hours of launching Operation Days of Repentance, which involved three waves of strikes targeting 20 locations, the Israeli military announced the operation had achieved all its objectives. Israeli media reported that approximately one hundred fighter jets participated, including F-35, F-16, and F-15 aircraft. NBC and ABC cited an Israeli official confirming that the targets excluded energy infrastructure and nuclear facilities. Iran, for its part, claimed its air defenses successfully repelled the attacks, though "limited damage" occurred at certain sites in Tehran, Khuzestan and Ilam. Axios reported that Israel, through a third party, sent Tehran a warning not to retaliate, seeking to curb further exchanges and prevent broader escalation.[120]

With the return of Donald Trump to the US presidency at the beginning of 2025, and Israel's success in weakening Iran's regional allies, an Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear program increasingly appeared to be only a matter of time, effectively opening the path for an Israeli attack on Iran. According to Benjamin Netanyahu, such a strike had initially been planned before April 2025. However, Trump's insistence on allowing a negotiation window, during which the US

sought to compel Iran to halt uranium enrichment, delayed the operation by sixty days.[121] On 13/6/2025, on the eve of the deadline set by Trump for reaching an agreement on Iran's nuclear program, and despite the announcement of a new round of negotiations, Israel launched a large-scale, coordinated military operation against Iran dubbed Operation Rising Lion. The operation involved more than 200 fighter jets and targeted around one hundred sites across Iran, including the IRGC headquarters, the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters of the armed forces, and several nuclear facilities, most notably the Natanz Nuclear Facility. Israeli military spokesperson Effie Defrin stated that Israeli warplanes had attacked and damaged Iranian air defense systems.

The attack resulted in the killing of at least twenty senior Iranian military commanders and six Iranian nuclear scientists. Iranian media reported the killing of the IRGC Commander-in-Chief Hossein Salami; the commander of the IRGC's Khatam al-Anbiya Headquarters, Gholam Ali Rashid, along with his deputy Mehdi Rabbani; as well as the Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces, Mohammad Bagheri, and IRGC Air Force head Amir Ali Hajizadeh.[122] Moreover, an Israeli security source indicated that the Mossad had maintained a significant presence within Iran for several years, particularly in Tehran, where it had established an operational branch. According to the source, Mossad special forces carried out a series of covert operations deep inside Iran in the period preceding the attack.[123]

In response, the IRGC announced the launch of Operation True Promise 3 and carried out a missile strike against Israel, targeting dozens of Israeli objectives, military centers, and air bases. Meanwhile, Israeli media reported estimates indicating that more than 100 missiles and around 100 drones had been launched from Iran.[124] Several reportedly penetrated Israel's air defense systems and struck multiple locations across Israel, including Haifa and Tel Aviv. In turn, Ali Khamenei warned Israel of severe punishment, stating, "With this crime, the Zionist regime has prepared for itself a bitter, painful fate, which it will definitely see."[125]

Benjamin Netanyahu stressed that the operation "will continue for as many days as it takes to remove the threat," with attacks primarily targeting Iran's missile production capabilities.[126] Tzachi Hanegbi specified that the goals of the operation, as approved by the cabinet, against Iran are four-fold: "striking Iran's

nuclear program, striking its ballistic missile capabilities; attacking its capacity to destroy Israel via a ground attack; and creating the conditions for the long-term thwarting of Iran's nuclear program via diplomatic means."[127]

On 22/6/2025, the US joined the attack on three Iranian nuclear facilities—Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan. In response, Iran launched six missiles at the US Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar in an operation it termed "Bashayer al-Fath." Doha, however, announced that its air defense systems had successfully intercepted the missiles.[128] Meanwhile, Donald Trump said "Iran gave the United States notice prior to shooting missiles at its military base in Qatar.[129]

A ceasefire between the parties was announced on 24/6/2025, with both sides claiming victory. Trump asserted that Iran's nuclear program had been "obliterated."[130] Israel likewise maintained that Iran had sustained significant losses affecting its nuclear program, missile production factories, missile stockpiles, launchers and Iran's leading nuclear scientists, while reiterating that "Iran will not have nuclear weapons."[131] Conversely, Iran claimed it had prevailed over its adversaries and that Israeli losses were greater than officially acknowledged. In particular, it pointed to strikes on areas in Tel Aviv, several security institutions, and scientific facilities such as the Weizmann Institute of Science and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, as well as the Haifa oil refineries and the headquarters of certain Israeli security agencies, incidents that Israel acknowledged only days after the confrontation.[132]

Estimates indicate that the war against Iran, which lasted 12 days, cost Israel's treasury about 22 billion shekels (about $6.44 billion), including around 10 billion shekels (about $2.92 billion) allocated to financing the expenditures of the Israeli military.[133] Nevertheless, Bezalel Smotrich stated that the total cost of the war could reach $12 billion.[134] Israeli medical officials also reported that 28 people were killed and 3,238 others injured as a result of Iran launching roughly 550 ballistic missiles and about one thousand drones at Israel during the war, most of which were intercepted, according to the Israeli military.[135] Estimates further indicate that throughout the conflict Israel and the US jointly launched about 195 interceptor missiles: 80 of the Arrow-3 type, 22 Arrow-2 missiles, and 93 THAAD interceptors.[136]

Moreover, Israeli authorities reported that more than 9 thousand people had been displaced from their homes. According to Channel 12, approximately 31 thousand buildings were damaged (out of 39 thousand reported damage claims), while 25 homes were deemed at risk of collapse and around 4 thousand vehicles were destroyed. The channel further reported that Iran launched 591 ballistic missiles, 67 of which penetrated air defenses and struck inside Israel. In addition, 1,050 drones were launched, with the channel claiming that 99% were intercepted. It also recorded 17,825 missile alerts over a 12-day period. The most extensive damage was reported in central Israel and the Tel Aviv metropolitan area (25 thousand damage reports), followed by Ashkelon (11 thousand reports).[137] Meanwhile, the Israeli Bazan Group reported that the damage caused by an Iranian missile attack on its Haifa Bay refinery and subsidiaries is estimated between $150 million and $200 million.[138]

According to Channel 12, Israel conducted approximately 1,500 airstrikes on Iranian territory, targeting 1,480 military sites. The channel further reported that Israel struck eight nuclear facilities in Iran, causing significant damage to two major installations. It also claimed that most of Iran's senior security leadership had been eliminated and that 260 missile launch platforms had been destroyed.[139] Similarly, the Israeli military stated that it had killed more than 30 Iranian security officials and 11 nuclear experts associated with Tehran's nuclear program. It further asserted that roughly 50% of Iran's missile launch platforms had been destroyed, in addition to 15 aircraft, while six airports were targeted.[140] Meanwhile, Saeed Ohadi, assistant to the president and head of Iran's Martyrs and Veterans Affairs Foundation, reported that 1,604 Iranians were killed during the Israeli assault and more than 5,800 were injured.[141]

Regarding Iran's nuclear program, most available reports, including those of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), suggest that the damage inflicted was greater than Iran acknowledges but significantly less than the claims advanced by the US and Israel.[142]

Sixth: Israeli Aggression Against Syria

Since 7/10/2023, Israel has repeatedly struck Syrian territory, targeting military sites and logistical infrastructure to prevent the establishment of new deterrence balances. Although Syria's direct responses have been limited, these attacks have fallen short of achieving their full strategic aims. The Syrian arena has therefore remained part of a broader cycle of reciprocal pressure, without escalating into an open front, while indirect responses have been pursued through other theaters, notably Lebanon and Iraq. As a result, Syria has become a continuous corridor of targeting within a wider confrontation between Israel and an integrated axis of resistance-supporting forces.

Since Operation al-Aqsa Flood, Syria has emerged as a direct target of Israeli attacks, which have intensified both in frequency and scale. Before the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime, these strikes were limited and primarily focused on Iranian positions, select Palestinian factions operating in Syria, and Hizbullah leaders and sites. Following the escalation of Israeli aggression in Lebanon in September 2024, attacks on Syria intensified markedly, targeting strategic Iranian and Hizbullah positions as well as various Syrian regime sites.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), Israel carried out 373 strikes on Syrian territory in 2024, of which 347 were airstrikes and 26 were rocket attacks, marking the highest annual total of Israeli attacks on Syria. These operations damaged or destroyed 1,032 targets, including weapons depots, military installations, vehicles, and border crossings, with particular focus on positions used by Hizbullah and Iran-aligned militias. In the eight months preceding Israel's large-scale offensive on Lebanon, 61 strikes were recorded by SOHR, rising to 98 during the three months of the campaign, resulting in 226 military fatalities.[143]

Amid a series of international, regional and domestic developments, most notably Donald Trump's election as US president and the implementation of the Lebanon ceasefire between Hizbullah and Israel, Syria experienced a dramatic shift on 27/11/2024, when opposition factions launched Operation Deterrence of Aggression. The offensive quickly escalated, culminating on 8/12/2024 in the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime and his departure from the country.[144] In the aftermath, Israel intensified its military operations, carrying out widespread

airstrikes across Syrian territory that targeted multiple sites within a compressed timeframe, alongside limited ground incursions in southern regions, including Quneitra and Mount Hermon.

By December 2024, Israeli strikes had escalated from selective targeting to broad-scale destruction. That month, the Israeli army carried out 214 airstrikes on Syrian territory, 210 of which followed the fall of the Assad regime. These operations, totaling approximately 500 sorties against Syrian air, land and naval forces, destroyed over 720 military targets[145] and effectively crippled Syria's conventional military capabilities. On 10/12/2024, the Israeli army announced that it has struck 320 "strategic targets" in Syria, from Damascus to Tartus, with over 350 fighter jets participating in the operation, dubbed Operation Bashan Arrow. The strikes reportedly destroyed aircraft, missile ships and strategic installations to prevent their capture by opposition forces. Israel claimed to have eliminated nearly 85% of Syria's strategic military assets within 48 hours, including "Scud missiles, cruise missiles, surface-to-sea, surface-to-air and surface-to-surface missiles, UAVs, fighter jets, attack helicopters, radars, tanks, hangars, and more." It further stated that "Israeli Navy missile ships struck two Syrian Navy facilities simultaneously: the Al-Bayda port and the Latakia port, where 15 Syrian naval vessels were docked."[146]

The 2024 strikes resulted in the deaths of 414 combatants and injuries to 277 others, predominantly from the IRGC, Hizbullah and other Iran-backed forces.[147]

Since early 2025, Israel has intensified its military operations in Syria, conducting 105 strikes, 89 aerial and 16 ground, which damaged or destroyed some 142 targets across multiple governorates. This pattern reflects a consistent model of cross-border operations, targeting not only weapons and ammunition depots but also military headquarters, centers and vehicles, across the south, central regions, the coast, and Damascus and its surroundings. These strikes resulted in 76 deaths, half of whom were personnel from Syria's Military Operations Administration (MOA) and the Ministry of Defense.[148]

Israel also exploited the security vacuum in southern Syria to expand its control, particularly within the buffer zone established under the 1974 Separation of Forces Agreement between Israel and Syria. Following the withdrawal of the Syrian army, Israel declared the agreement effectively collapsed and launched a

military campaign through which it seized about 440 km² (other estimates put the figure at 600 km²). The areas captured included several strategic locations, most notably the summit of Mount Hermon, as well as Tulul al-Humur, Jubata al-Khashab, and al-Hamidiyah. Israeli forces subsequently established military bases and observation posts there, benefiting from the withdrawal of Russian forces from southern Syria and the near-total absence of the Syrian army.[149] However security sources indicated that Israel's military incursion reached roughly 20 km southwest of Damascus.[150]

This Israeli escalation in Syria can be understood as part of efforts to establish new facts on the ground along the Syrian border, including the installation of military positions inside Syrian territory that did not exist during the Assad regime. At the same time, Israel seeks to consolidate its security red lines without bearing the costs of a long-term occupation. Furthermore, Israel appears to be attempting to influence Syria's internal balances and reshape its political landscape in ways that serve its security and strategic interests, including through selective support for minorities, particularly the Druze. In this context, Israel has repeatedly stated that its strikes in Syria aim to protect the Druze from threats posed by the Syrian government and armed factions, especially following the clashes in Suwayda in July 2025.[151]

Seventh: Iraqi Resistance Operations

Iraq has functioned as a site of indirect support for the Palestinian resistance in GS. Since the outset of the war in GS, the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Muhammad Shia' al-Sudani sought to respond in a conventional manner, expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people while refraining from military involvement. Al- Sudani, like other Arab leaders, balanced Iraq's ties with the US and its substantial security and economic influence, while avoiding confrontation with Iran, whose political and security sway in Iraq remains considerable. He also sought to exert control over Iran-aligned armed factions, which largely ignored his political calculations in deciding whether to engage in the conflict within the resistance axis and "unity of arenas."[152]

Following the onset of the war, Iraq contributed to broadening the conflict. Factions operating under the banner of the "Islamic Resistance in Iraq" launched drone and missile attacks on US and Israeli bases in the region, framing their actions as retaliation for the assault on GS and in support of the Palestinian resistance. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq encompasses several armed groups, including the Kata'ib Hizbullah, Harakat Hizbullah al-Nujaba, Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada', Harakat Ansar Allah al-Awfiya (HAAA), Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) and Tashkil Al-Warithin.

These operations prompted coordinated responses from both the US and Israel, which targeted the factions' positions as the attacks increasingly pressured the US administration amid mounting American military casualties. The factions conducted strikes from Iraqi and Syrian territory against US bases in both countries in retaliation for US support of Israel's campaign in GS. Key targets included Ain al-Asad air base, Kharab al-Jir base, al-Shaddadi base, al-Harir air base, al-Tanf base, Rmelan air base, al-Malikiyah base, and the vicinity of the Koniko (or Conoco) natural gas field and al-Omar oil field, as well as US forces near Erbil Airport and the Green Village. In their statements, the resistance underscored that these operations achieved direct hits on the intended targets.[153]

According to statistics released by these factions on 26/4/2024, they conducted a total of 243 attacks since 17/10/2023, with 90 in Iraq, 88 within Israel, and 65 in Syria,[154] demonstrating that the majority of these actions were directed against US forces in Iraq and Syria. Among the most significant of these attacks was a drone strike on 28/1/2024, in which the US military reported three soldiers killed and 34 wounded at the Logistics Support Base at "Tower 22" in the Rukban area of Al-Ruwaished District, north-eastern Jordan, near the Syrian border. Executed by Kata'ib Hizbullah, the strike prompted retaliatory US airstrikes targeting dozens of armed faction sites across Iraq and Syria, accompanied by public warnings from senior US officials.[155]

Since April 2024, Iraqi factions have shifted their focus toward targeting Israeli sites, having previously concentrated on US targets. At the same time, the frequency of their drone attacks has increased and their scope has expanded to include strategic facilities. These operations have targeted airports, ports, power

stations, chemical facilities and Israeli military bases. Furthermore, these factions have claimed responsibility for attacks on vital Israeli targets in the Jordan Valley, the occupied Golan Heights, Beersheba, Tiberias, Haifa, Tel Aviv and Eilat, in addition to the Israeli Karish gas field platform. They also reported striking a "vital target" in Haifa using the long-range cruise missile al-Arqab (an upgraded cruise missile).[156] Nevertheless, although these groups maintain that the strikes directly hit their intended targets, Israel, along with independent sources, has generally not confirmed these claims or reported specific casualties or losses.

In November 2024, US military officials reported that Israel was facing daily drone attacks launched from Iraq, which US forces and their partners were compelled to intercept. A US regional security officer further indicated that approximately five launches per day were carried out from Iraqi territory by these factions targeting Israel. According to the conflict-monitoring organization ACLED, and based on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) analysis of its data, attacks by Iraqi factions escalated to roughly 25 per week. The factions themselves claimed responsibility for 35 attacks against Israel in September 2024, 47 in October 2024, and 25 in Novemebr 2024. These figures refer to the number of attacks rather than the number of strikes within each attack, as a single attack may involve multiple strikes.[157]

One of the most notable operations occurred on 2/10/2024, when a drone targeted an Israeli military base in the northern occupied Syrian Golan, killing two soldiers and injuring 25 others. Significantly, this was the first instance since the beginning of Israel's military campaign in which Iraqi factions succeeded in causing Israeli fatalities and injuries.[158]

Nevertheless, despite the large number of operations claimed by these factions and their escalatory rhetoric toward Israel, their actions remained the least impactful among the Axis actors,[159] likely due to their limited capabilities and geographical distance. By late November 2024, the factions had quietly stopped issuing statements announcing attacks against Israeli occupation, without any formal declaration. This development coincided with the ceasefire between Israel and Hizbullah in Lebanon. According to Yasser Watout, a member of the Iraqi parliament's Security and Defense Committee, the suspension of operations

resulted from "pressure on the factions from the Iraqi government and Shiite political actors within the Coordination Framework (CF) alliance, in addition to external threats directed at Iraq." He further noted that Iraq had received "threats from Israel and even from the US," adding that "the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria was a key factor in halting operations," as the factions could no longer launch attacks from Syrian territory as they had previously done.[160]

Eighth: The Peace Process

In 2024–2025, the Palestine issue entered one of its most critical phases since the *Nakbah* of 1948. The genocidal war on GS coincided with an unprecedented escalation of settlement and annexation in the WB and significant shifts in the international system, particularly in global public opinion. The false Zionist narrative faltered, giving way to a Palestinian framing of the issue as a struggle for national liberation, in contrast to attempts to reduce it to a humanitarian matter concerning a population rather than a people entitled to self-determination.

In this context, the "two-state solution" has resurfaced within international political discourse, notably promoted by the administration of President Joe Biden as well as by certain European and Arab powers. Although this initiative carries symbolic weight, particularly in light of the growing number of states recognizing the Palestinian state—including the UK, the author of the Balfour Declaration, and France—it has largely remained rhetorical. Such recognition has not been accompanied by sanctions against Israel or by substantive shifts in the policies of these states. Consequently, despite its diplomatic significance, this approach is fundamentally at odds with the realities on the ground, where Israel continues to impose facts through occupation and settlement expansion, making the prospect of a Palestinian state increasingly remote. Unless international recognition is translated into concrete policies, sanctions, or other mechanisms capable of enforcing a genuine political track, its practical effect will remain limited. Indeed, in the absence of a serious political process on the ground, this discourse has effectively provided political cover for Israeli policies that undermine any realistic possibility of establishing an independent Palestinian state.

The following section seeks to examine the developments of 2024–2025, analyze the underlying causes of the peace process deadlock, and assess potential trajectories in the near term, taking into account ongoing regional and international transformations.

1. Lack of Progress in the Peace Process 2024–2025

During the period examined in this study, the peace process experienced no substantive advancement. Palestinian–Israeli negotiations were not resumed, nor were any new international initiatives introduced that transcended the conventional framework established since the Oslo Accords. Consequently, the "peace process" has effectively disappeared from the agenda, supplanted by a logic aimed at managing or containing the conflict, ultimately seeking to resolve it at the expense of Palestinian rights.

This is reflected in several developments:

- The complete absence of any formal political process or negotiation-oriented meetings since 2014.
- The persistent pursuit of unilateral Israeli policies.
- The international community's emphasis on managing humanitarian crises, without addressing their underlying political causes.

2. The Nature of the Zionist Project, Its Rejection of Settlements, and the Limits of a Historical Settlement

The current impasse in the peace process cannot be understood without considering the nature of the Zionist project itself. From its inception, it developed as a settler-colonial project aimed at controlling the land while excluding and displacing its indigenous population. Accordingly, it has relied on force, aggression, killing, settlement expansion, occupation, ethnic cleansing, and displacement as principal instruments for achieving its objectives.

Historical experience further underscores this pattern. Beginning with the 1947 partition resolution, which envisaged the establishment of an Arab state (for Palestinian Arabs) on a territory roughly twice the size of WB and GS combined, and continuing through the Oslo Accords, Israel has not treated settlement as a framework for ending the conflict. Rather, it has used it as a mechanism for

managing the conflict while consolidating its control. In doing so, it has benefited from the imbalance of power, unconditional US and Western support, damaging Palestinian miscalculations, and the persistence and deepening of the Palestinian schism.

3. The Current Israeli Government and the Project for Final Resolution

The formation of Israel's current government, arguably the most extreme in its history, has reinforced this trajectory. Comprising religious and ultranationalist forces with openly racist and fascist agendas, it rejects Palestinian national rights and advocates annexation, territorial expansion and the displacement of Palestinians.

The government frames the present moment as a "historic opportunity" to resolve the conflict definitively, pursuing measures that include:

- Imposing Israeli sovereignty over the WB, as reflected in Knesset resolutions overwhelmingly rejecting a Palestinian state and endorsing annexation.
- Reducing the Palestinian presence to a minimal level.
- Preventing any sovereign Palestinian entity, while systematically undermining the PA in the WB and promoting alternative forms of representation in GS that bypass established Palestinian representative institutions.

4. The Structural Nature of US Bias

US policy constitutes a central factor in the stalemate of the peace process. Rather than serving as a neutral mediator, the US has become an organic strategic partner of Israel, evident in its unlimited military support, use of the UNSC veto, and obstruction of international efforts to hold Israel accountable. The Trump plan, for example, contained no commitment to a political track toward a Palestinian state, instead it imposed conditions on the PA's participation, contingent on reforms deemed "satisfactory" by Washington and Tel Aviv, and based on their decisions.

President Joe Biden has further demonstrated this bias, openly aligning ideologically with Zionism while showing little capacity or willingness to exert meaningful pressure on the Israeli government. Similarly, Trump underscored this partiality by asserting that Israel, as a small state, required territorial expansion at the expense of the Greater Middle East.

5. The Two-State Solution Discourse as a Conflict-Management Tool

Although frequently invoked, the discourse of the two-state solution has rarely translated into actionable policy. Instead, it has served to manage international pressure and deflect criticism, without challenging the core of Israeli policies.

In this context, the two-state solution has shifted from a substantive political project to a rhetorical instrument, used to justify postponing fundamental issues and conditioning any political progress on security and administrative requirements imposed by Israel. With Donald Trump's presidency, the two-state framework was effectively sidelined, granting the Israeli government renewed impetus to advance the conflict on its own terms and pursue the vision of "Greater Israel."

6. Transforming the Palestinian State into a Conditional Reward

A critical shift in the peace process has been the redefinition of the Palestinian state from an inherent, inalienable legal right into a conditional political reward. At times, this reward is contingent upon recognition of Israel and its right to exist; at others, it hinges on "reforming" the PA according to US–Israeli standards. In effect, this approach subjects the Palestinian right to self-determination to the logic of external hegemony rather than to international law.

This approach directly contradicts:

- UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions.
- The principle of peoples' right to self-determination.
- The international recognition of the State of Palestine in 2012, with 159 states having recognized it at the time of writing

7. Continuity of Trump-era Policies Under Biden

Despite the formal transition following the 2020 elections, the Biden administration has largely preserved the key policies of Trump's first term, including:

- Relocating the US embassy to Jerusalem.
- Reopening the consulate that had been closed in East Jerusalem.
- Closing the PLO office in Washington.
- Suspending support to the PA.
- Maintaining recognition of Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights.

These actions highlight the enduring structural bias of US policy.

8. The Genocidal War in GS as a Political Instrument

The genocidal war in GS marked the apex of this trajectory, employing unlimited military force to pursue political objectives, foremost among them the breaking of Palestinian resolve and the imposition of new facts on the ground.

While Israel did not achieve all its declared goals, it succeeded in inflicting widespread destruction and producing catastrophic humanitarian conditions, later leveraged to exert political pressure.

9. International Trusteeship and the Reframing of the Palestine Issue

The arrangements following the ceasefire effectively imposed a form of international, particularly US, trusteeship over GS, presented under the guise of international legitimacy. This framework shifted responsibility onto the victim while absolving the occupier of any accountability, without any clear commitment to ending the occupation.

This approach reflects a reframing of the Palestine issue as a matter of managing the occupation, planning for post-conflict scenarios, and addressing humanitarian and administrative concerns, rather than as a struggle for national liberation. Consequently, the population is treated as mere residents, and Palestine is conceptualized as fragmented territories, even between WB and GS, thereby entrenching division and territorial segmentation.

10. Targeting Palestinian Political Representation

This approach seeks to undermine Palestinian political representation by marginalizing the PLO and denying its role as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, despite widespread international recognition. While Israeli–US conduct has been a primary driver of this trend, the unilateral approach of the PLO leadership has, in parallel, reinforced it, particularly through its failure to incorporate influential and effective Palestinian forces on the ground, its inactivation of PLO institutions, and its marginalization of Palestinians abroad.

This approach constitutes a strategic threat, as it facilitates the circumvention of Palestinian rights and the legitimate representative of the people. If left unchecked, it risks producing imposed solutions that lack national legitimacy.

11. The WB and the Creeping Annexation Plans

In WB, Israel continues to implement "creeping annexation" plans through settlement expansion, territorial fragmentation, the isolation of Jerusalem, and the displacement of Palestinian communities, as part of a broader project aimed at "annexing land while excluding its population."

12. The Abraham Accords and Their Limits

The US has sought to expand Arab normalization with Israel; however, the outbreak of Operation al-Aqsa Flood has reshaped this agenda. Several Arab states, notably Saudi Arabia, have made any future normalization conditional on the establishment of a Palestinian state or, at minimum, the initiation of a credible and serious process to achieve it.

13. The Saudi–French Initiative and International Recognition

The Saudi–French initiative helped revive the two-state solution on the international stage, generating both political and moral momentum, as evidenced by the growing number of states recognizing Palestine. Nevertheless, its impact remained limited in the absence of effective pressure mechanisms.

14. International Shifts and the Surge in Global Public Opinion

The genocidal campaign in GS sparked an unprecedented wave of international solidarity with the Palestinian people and exposed the Israeli narrative to wide segments of global public opinion, producing a long-lasting cultural and political shift.

Conclusion

During 2024–2025, the Palestinian resistance, supported by its popular base, continued a sustained and intense confrontation against the most severe Israeli campaign targeting GS since its occupation in 1967. Meanwhile, the scope of hostilities expanded to include the WB, as well as Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iran. Israel's extensive use of destructive force resulted in tens of thousands of fatalities, as well as the destruction or damage of about 80% of homes, infrastructure, hospitals, schools and places of worship. It also led to the internal forced displacement of

more than 90% of GS's population. Moreover, siege conditions were imposed, marked by deprivation of water, food, medicine, electricity and fuel, in addition to the deployment of about 200 thousand tons of explosives (equivalent to 15 nuclear bombs similar to the one dropped on Hiroshima). Nevertheless, Israel failed to eliminate the resistance, which remained operational until the final stages of the war. Moreover, it did not secure the release of any of its captives except under the resistance's terms.

During 2024–2025, the WB witnessed an unprecedented Israeli escalation since Operation al-Aqsa Flood, marked by near-daily incursions, field assassinations, mass arrests, and systematic destruction of infrastructure in RCs, alongside a sharp increase in settler violence, particularly in Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarm. In parallel, and despite security coordination between the PA security forces and the Israeli army, as well as highly adverse conditions, Palestinian resistance continued through both individual and organized operations. Moreover, daily confrontations and various forms of popular resistance persisted, amid rising fatalities and detainees, tightening restrictions on Palestinian movement, and recurrent closures of neighbourhoods and cities.

In Lebanon, Hizbullah continued its strong support for the Palestinian resistance. In response, the Israeli leadership shifted its focus after mid-September 2024 toward Lebanon, targeting Hizbullah, its infrastructure and its social base. However, it encountered sustained resistance from the party and other resistance forces until the war ceased on 27/11/2024. Nevertheless, as of this writing, Israel continues to violate Lebanese territory through assassinations, bombardment, and destruction, aiming to pressure the disarmament of Hizbullah.

In Yemen, Ansar Allah (the Houthis) introduced a new dimension to the war by turning the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab Strait into a strategic pressure front against Israel and its supporting states. Despite significant losses, including hundreds killed and extensive infrastructure damage, Ansar Allah has maintained its commitment to supporting the resistance in GS and backing Palestine until the end of the war, while consistently affirming its readiness to continue this support regardless of the cost.

In Iraq, the "Islamic Resistance in Iraq" emerged as a distant support front, primarily targeting US bases, before subsequently extending its operations toward Israeli depth.

Iran, in turn, supported the Palestinian resistance and stood by it during Operation al-Aqsa Flood, while largely avoiding direct military confrontation with Israel. Nevertheless, it later became involved in more intense confrontations, most notably the 12-day war in June 2025.

By contrast, 2024 and 2025 marked the most lethal years for prisoners, who were subjected to systematic and severe torture, deprived of their basic rights, and exposed to starvation, the spread of infectious diseases, as well as extreme cold and heat.

On the other hand, it is evident that the peace process has reached an impasse, and that the prospect of a political settlement leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders has become increasingly detached from political reality. This is due not only to the imbalance of power, but also to the nature of the Zionist project itself, which is based on the negation of the other and the rejection of historic compromises, in addition to US support for the Israeli position opposing the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Based on current developments, it is unlikely that 2026–2027 will witness a serious political process. Instead, open conflict is expected to continue, accompanied by attempts to impose a flawed settlement that, at best, would produce a Palestinian entity devoid of sovereignty, unless there is a fundamental shift in the balance of power or in the political structures at the Palestinian, Arab, regional and international levels. The future of the Palestine issue remains open to multiple possibilities, dependent on the Palestinians' capacity to rebuild their national project and to capitalize on regional and international transformations in a world where unilateral dominance is waning and a more multipolar order is emerging.

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Chapter Five

The Israeli Scene

The Israeli Scene

Introduction

The years 2024 and 2025 witnessed a profound internal crisis within Israel, marked by a state of strategic imbalance that generated significant external repercussions. In response, Israel has sought to navigate this crisis by moving toward a more authoritarian political order, while increasingly adopting more extreme positions and a forceful posture toward the Palestine issue and the regional environment. However, such an approach is likely to deepen existing challenges and contribute to sustained long-term instability.

This chapter, therefore, examines the internal Israeli political scene, alongside demographic, economic and military conditions, and further analyzes the Israeli position on the internal Palestinian situation.

First: The Internal Israeli Political Scene

This section examines the internal Israeli landscape, with a focus on key political and social developments. In this regard, the internal dynamics of 2025 may be seen as part of the broader lead-up to the 2026 Israeli elections, which are widely viewed as decisive for Israel's political, social and strategic trajectory. Moreover, these developments reflect the continuing struggle over the state's identity and the nature of its political system. Internal contestation has thus centered on the ruling right wing's efforts both to preserve the governing coalition and to advance core elements of its ideological agenda, most notably constitutional changes, which have assumed particular prominence at this stage.

Accordingly, the analysis addresses the principal issues that have intensified internal political tensions and deepened social divisions, including the nature of the political system, the trial of Benjamin Netanyahu, the conscription of ultra-Orthodox Jews (Haredim), and the durability of the Israeli government. Taken together, these issues carry significant implications and are likely to form the central axis of the forthcoming elections.

Two Years of War and Their Domestic Repercussions

The war on GS stands as the longest in Israel's history, with its costs exceeding 300 billion shekels (about $87 billion).[1] It might have continued for an even longer period had it not been for pressure from US President Donald Trump to accept his plan to halt the war.[2]

In terms of domestic support, the war evolved through two distinct phases. Initially, it enjoyed broad social and political consensus, which conferred legitimacy on Benjamin Netanyahu's government to remain in power and manage the war until its objectives were achieved; this consensus largely endured through the end of 2024. Subsequently, however, the war lost this internal consensus and increasingly came to be perceived as both personal and ideological in nature. On the one hand, it has been viewed as a personal war for Netanyahu, aimed at ensuring his political survival by leveraging wartime conditions to prolong his government's tenure. On the other hand, it has been seen as an ideological war serving the objectives of the religious settler right, particularly the occupation of GS, the displacement of its population, and the expansion of settlement activity therein.[3]

Israel has waged the longest war in its history, with its latter phase unfolding in the absence of broad domestic consensus. Traditionally, Israeli wars have both begun and concluded under a unified national consensus, with public debate and contestation emerging only after the end of hostilities, often accompanied, where deemed necessary, by the establishment of an official commission of inquiry, as occurred following the 1973 war and the Lebanon wars of 1982 and 2006. Nevertheless, the 1982 war of Lebanon constituted a notable exception. While it initially enjoyed wide support, this consensus rapidly eroded following the occupation of Beirut and the Sabra and Shatila massacre, which in turn triggered large-scale protests within Israel. The subsequent loss of consensus contributed to Israel's withdrawal to the security zone in southern Lebanon and prompted the formation of the Kahan Commission. Its findings ultimately led to the removal of Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and, in due course, the resignation of Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

Conversely, the current government has declined to establish an official commission of inquiry and has instead advanced a bill to establish a "consensual"

investigative body, thereby circumventing the authority of the President of the Supreme Court to appoint such a commission under the State Commissions of Inquiry Law. This position also elucidates the broader campaign against the Supreme Court, particularly its current president Isaac Amit, aimed at undermining his legitimacy and asserting that he is unfit to constitute a commission of inquiry due to alleged bias against the right-wing government.

The erosion of consensus over the war and the priorities of its objectives, since June 2024, produced significant domestic repercussions. In this regard, the withdrawal of Benny Gantz from the government in June 2024 was not coincidental; rather, it both reflected and reinforced this emerging erosion.[4] Furthermore, it may be argued that, absent Donald Trump's intervention to halt the fighting after two years, Netanyahu would have continued the war for an indeterminate period.[5] Notably, a poll by The Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) found that 66% of Israelis believed that, after two years, "the time has come to end the war in Gaza."[6]

The prolongation of the war has further deepened internal fractures within Israeli society. In a study by Israeli political psychologist Nimrod Nir on domestic polarization in Israel one year after the outbreak of the war, it is argued that the initial sense of unity that marked Israeli society at the war's onset rapidly eroded, giving way to internal division as the foremost perceived existential threat. In this regard, 62.6% of all Israelis polled said that they believed the greater threat to the future of Israel was from internal divisions and threats, with 37.4% saying that external threats posed the biggest danger to the country. By contrast, a comparative analysis with the same survey conducted in October 2023 shows a marked shift, where 77.2% said they believed the war had unified Israeli society, this figure fell to 40.2% by October 2024. Meanwhile, those believing that the war increased polarization in Israeli society rose significantly from 12.1% to 40.6%.[7]

The protracted duration of the war, coupled with deepening divisions over its conduct and mounting doubts regarding the legitimacy of the political leadership in managing it, has significantly intensified internal fractures within Israeli society to an unprecedented degree.

Political System Shift Toward Authoritarian-Populist Governance

The Israeli political system witnessed a notable shift toward authoritarian-populist dynamics in 2025. According to a report by the Zulat Institute for Equality and Human Rights, Israel had effectively transitioned into "competitive authoritarianism," positioned between a flawed democracy and full-scale authoritarianism.[8] In a similar vein, former Supreme Court President Aharon Barak stated in a pre-recorded speech at an anti-government rally that Israel is "no longer a liberal democracy," arguing instead that it was moving toward a one-man rule.[9] Moreover, in another statement, he argued that "the relationship between the political establishment and the army, the police and the Shin Bet [Israel Security Agency—ISA (*Shabak*)] has completely deteriorated. The prime minister sees himself as authorized to dictate how to act in each arena. Protesters are treated as criminals. I think we are no longer citizens, but subjects."[10]

In the same context, Supreme Court President Isaac Amit stated at a swearing-in ceremony for lawyers who passed the bar exam that he and his colleagues were witnessing blatant disregard for the law, alongside an attitude that "treats court rulings like recommendations." He further argued that "the legal system is facing an attack that far exceeds legitimate criticism," adding, "If public officials ignore court rulings they don't like, then why should an ordinary citizen be bound by them?" and concluding that "If the law is not equal for everyone, then the law is worthless."[11] Amit, whose position as the Supreme Court president is not recognized by the government, is being boycotted by Justice Minister Yariv Levin, who is widely regarded as the architect of the constitutional overhaul and the campaign against the judiciary. He is likewise boycotted by the Speaker of the Knesset, Amir Ohana. In practical terms, both the legislative and executive branches are engaged in a concerted effort to delegitimize the judicial system as a whole, and the Supreme Court in particular.

The election and inauguration of Donald Trump in January 2025 contributed to accelerating constitutional changes in Israel. Under the administration of Joe Biden, however, these developments had been openly opposed, and Biden reportedly declined to meet Netanyahu prior to 7/10/2023, in light of the Israeli government's efforts to restructure the political system through attempts to subordinate or

control the judiciary. In parallel, *The New York Times* opinions columnist Thomas Friedman published an article urging the Biden administration to intervene and halt these measures, contending that Biden was the only actor capable of constraining the Israeli government's decisions and the broader institutional changes underway, which he viewed as undermining Israel's democratic system and steering it toward rule by an extremist government.[12]

Donald Trump introduced a political culture broadly aligned with that of the ruling right-wing populist camp, particularly in its governing style and its disregard for state institutions and the judiciary. In this context, during 2025, the government advanced a series of legislative initiatives aimed at restricting freedom of expression, limiting judicial authority, and tightening control over the media. Moreover, it blocked the establishment of an official commission of inquiry into the events of 7/10/2023, while instead putting forward the idea of legislation to establish a political investigative committee.

These legislative initiatives were intended to restructure the political system, with particular emphasis on the judiciary. In this regard, the government advanced several key proposals:

1. Dividing the functions of the government's legal adviser by removing its role as attorney general—including authority over approving investigations and indictments against public officials—while limiting it to legal counsel, alongside the establishment of a separate attorney general position.
2. Expanding the jurisdiction of Jewish religious courts to encompass civil matters.
3. Reclassifying ministerial legal advisers as politically appointed positions, thereby allowing ministers to select them based on political alignment rather than professional qualifications.
4. Separating the police investigations department from the public prosecution and placing it under the authority of the Minister of National Security.
5. Introducing legislation targeting civil society organizations by imposing an 80% tax on donations from foreign states, particularly the EU, which often fund organizations critical of government policies.

Civil and political opposition forces in Israel contend that the government is leveraging the wartime context to advance a project initiated in 2023 aimed at a "judicial overhaul," thereby subordinating key institutional "guardians" of the democratic order through dismissal or intimidation. Against this backdrop, during a single week in 2025 (21–28 March), the government undertook three measures widely viewed as crossing established red lines in Israeli political practice: the unanimous dismissal of the Shabak Chief Ronen Bar, with the decision entering into force on 10/4/2025; a unanimous vote of no confidence in the government's legal adviser; and the final passage, in its third reading, of legislation restructuring the Judicial Selection Committee. This change substantially reduces "the influence of sitting judges and increases political control over appointments."[13] Notably, this legislation had been a central pillar of the 2023 judicial overhaul agenda, which the government subsequently shelved in response to mass public protests at the time.

The governing right capitalized on the war in GS to advance its constitutional reform agenda. Notably, pre-war protests had forced the government to retreat from most components of the justice minister's judicial overhaul, confining it to changes in the judicial appointments committee, a measure it subsequently abandoned under sustained pressure, including from within the military establishment. However, with the outbreak of the war on GS and Benjamin Netanyahu's consolidation of power, the government enacted the revised law restructuring the committee, passing it with virtually no public opposition.

Whereas the previous nine-member panel afforded significant representation to the judiciary, through judges and lawyers, including members of the Israel Bar Association, the new law shifts the balance decisively toward the political echelon, particularly in appointments to the Supreme Court. In this context, the government's Legal Advisor "Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara has strongly opposed the legislation, warning that it undermines judicial independence," adding, "the law would erode the professional standards of judicial appointments and give political considerations undue influence."[14]

Table 1/5: Changes to the Judicial Selection Committee in Israel

Change	Implication
Replacing representatives of the Israel Bar Association, previously selected by the Association, with lawyers appointed by political actors.	Granting the political echelon a majority on the committee, as appointed lawyers are likely to be politically aligned with its members.
Reducing the required majority for appointing Supreme Court judges from seven members to five.	Effectively eliminating the judiciary's capacity to oppose judicial appointments, leaving politicians as the sole actors empowered to appoint Supreme Court judges.
In the absence of agreement on a Supreme Court appointment within one year, the coalition and opposition each nominate three candidates, from whom one is selected.	Effectively excluding judiciary from meaningful influence over Supreme Court appointments.

The Supreme Court suspended the decisions to dismiss both the Shabak Chief and the Attorney General. Following judicial deliberations over his removal, Ronen Bar ultimately resigned at the end of June 2025, after submitting a written affidavit to the Court in which he disclosed Netanyahu's efforts to instrumentalize the Shabak in pursuit of political objectives and to surveil political opponents, an approach the Shabak rejected. Subsequently, Netanyahu appointed David Zini as the Shabak Chief, a highly religious and ideologically hardline general. This appointment marks a clear departure from established practice, according to which the Shabak Chief is typically selected from within the organization, most often the deputy chief.

In practice, the executive has sought to consolidate control over law enforcement institutions, particularly the police and the Shabak. The former has effectively been transformed into "Ben-Gvir's police," as the minister has entrenched his authority and advanced his agenda, including through unlawful interference in police operations. As a result, it has increasingly taken on the characteristics of a political police force, with the exception of certain units, such as the Police Central Investigations Unit. Furthermore, the appointment of Zini appears to reflect an effort to extend influence over the Shabak, or at least to limit its opposition to government policies on contentious issues.

The constitutional amendments are, inter alia, designed to entrench Netanyahu's rule. In this vein, the government approved a measure that circumvents the authority of the legal advisor to remove a sitting prime minister. Notably, the Basic Law: The Government does not elaborate on the procedures for removing a prime minister or declaring incapacity. Rather, Article 20(b) contains a single, broadly framed provision stipulating, "Should the Prime Minister be permanently incapacitated, the Government shall be deemed to have resigned on the 101st day during which the Acting Prime Minister served in his place."[15]

The law does not specify the grounds or causes of incapacity, nor does it designate the authority empowered to declare a prime minister's inability to perform his duties. Notably, this provision has been invoked only once in Israel's history, in 2005, when former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a medical condition that led to a prolonged coma. He was subsequently declared permanently incapacitated, and Ehud Olmert, then acting prime minister, assumed the premiership for 100 days, after which new elections were called in Israel. In Sharon's case, the incapacity stemmed from a coma (illness), and it was later confirmed that he would not recover within the legally stipulated 100-day period.

In an attempt to circumvent a potential declaration of Prime Minister Netanyahu's incapacity by the Attorney General, the government amended Section 20(b), which regulates this matter, in March 2023 as part of the broader constitutional overhaul. The amendment stipulated that "that a sitting prime minister can be declared unfit and forced to step down if they or three-quarters of Cabinet ministers declare them so on physical or psychological grounds." This declaration would then require the endorsement of 80 members of the Knesset (MKs), unless the prime minister himself declares that he is unable to perform his duties due to physical or psychological reasons.[16] Following petitions filed with the Supreme Court against this amendment, the Court ruled in January 2024 that its implementation would apply only to the "next elected Knesset" and not the current one, on the grounds that the amendment was "clearly personal in nature" and had been tailored to address circumstances specifically related to Netanyahu.[17]

Accordingly, the legal basis for removing Netanyahu or declaring him unfit to perform his duties without government approval remains formally available. Nevertheless, despite growing pressure on the legal advisor to act in light of

Netanyahu's non-compliance with Supreme Court rulings and his disregard for directives issued by the government's legal advisor, such a step appears highly unlikely. This difficulty stems from deep societal polarization in Israel, the absence of any comparable precedent involving Netanyahu, and the lack of a clear legal mandate empowering the legal advisor to take such action.

In contrast, the legal advisor has called on Netanyahu to dismiss the Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, citing substantive violations in his management of the police, particularly its politicization, interference in its professional operations, and involvement in the appointment and promotion of senior officers. This also includes his breach of the understandings reached upon assuming office, commitments he initially pledged to uphold but subsequently violated in a systematic manner. Accordingly, Ben-Gvir has become one of the most outspoken opponents of the legal advisor, even calling for her dismissal, while the Supreme Court is expected to adjudicate her request for his removal.

Within this context, the government's decision to dismiss the legal advisor—subsequently annulled by the Supreme Court, as noted earlier—appears to have been aimed at curbing her influence, given her opposition to a series of governmental measures deemed unconstitutional. Foremost among these is the proposed legislation exempting the Haredim from military service, a matter to be examined in greater detail below.

Government Stability

Netanyahu managed to preserve the cohesion of his government throughout 2025, despite facing a series of substantial challenges. These included two ceasefire agreements in GS (January 2025 and October 2025), the Haredi conscription law, rising cost-of-living pressures, and the continuation of his trial.

More broadly, the war has reshaped the balance of power within the political landscape. In this context, opinion polls conducted from October 2023 until the time of writing indicate that the war is likely to bring down the current government in the next elections (see table 2/5). Consequently, the forthcoming elections may well signal the end of Netanyahu's political career within the Israeli political arena.

Table 2/5: Illustrative Model of Electoral List Representation Based on October 2025 Opinion Polls Following the Gaza Agreement, Compared With the 2022 Election Results

	Channel 13 Oct. 2025[18]	*Maariv* Oct. 2025[19]	Channel 12 Oct. 2025[20]	2022 Election Results
Current Government Coalition Lists				
Likud	27	25	27	32
Jewish Power (*Otzma Yehudit*)	9	7	8	14
Religious Zionism	5	–	–	
United Torah Judaism	7	7	7	7
Shas	10	9	9	11
Total	**57**	**48**	**51**	**64**
Opposition Lists and Newly Formed Lists				
Bennett 2026	23	21	22	–
Yisrael Beiteinu	9	10	9	4
The Democrats	8	12	11	4 (Labor Party)
Yesh Atid	10	9	9	24
Hadash–Ta'al	5	6	5	5
Yashar! (Gadi Eisenkot)	5	9	8	–
UAL	4	5	5	5
Blue and White	–	–	–	12
Balad	–	–	–	–
Total	**63**	**72**	**69**	**56**

* The names of lists, parties and alliances are abbreviated to simplify the table, where UAL: United Arab List —Ra'am; Hadash: Democratic Front for Peace and Equality; Balad: National Democratic Assembly; and Ta'al: Arab Movement for Renewal.

Accordingly, Netanyahu has resisted efforts to advance early elections, a stance that has, in turn, contributed to the prolongation of the war. This, however, does not signal a retreat of right-wing ideas; rather, right-wing ideology has become increasingly hegemonic within Israeli society, particularly in relation to the conflict with the Palestinians. At the same time, opposition to Netanyahu does not originate from the left. Instead, it is composed of right-wing figures such as Naftali Bennett and Avigdor Lieberman, alongside centre-right actors including Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz. Importantly, this opposition targets Netanyahu's current government and his personal leadership, as well as more extreme factions within it, which both liberal and conservative segments of the right view as deviating from acceptable norms regarding civil liberties, the preservation of judicial authority, and rising populist extremism, among other concerns. In addition, it reflects broader criticism of the government's overall performance across multiple domains, most notably its failure on 7/10/2023.

Nevertheless, Netanyahu managed to maintain the stability of his government throughout 2025.[21] This outcome is primarily attributable to two factors. First, all coalition partners concurred that holding elections would likely result in their loss of power and their inability to form a new government, alongside the forfeiture of the substantial benefits Netanyahu had granted to each component of the coalition. Second, there is a shared understanding that they would have no role in any future government not led by Netanyahu; consequently, their only viable option is to remain within the current coalition despite persistent internal disagreements.

Over the past two years (2024–2025), various components of the governing coalition repeatedly threatened to bring down the government if it adopted policies diverging from their political priorities. However, none of these threats was ultimately carried out. In particular, far-right religious parties (Otzma Yehudit, led by Ben-Gvir, and Religious Zionism, led by Smotrich) repeatedly warned that they would collapse the government if Netanyahu deviated from the war objectives in GS or agreed to a ceasefire agreement. Yet neither party ultimately followed through. Similarly, Haredi parties, which had for three consecutive years threatened to withdraw from the government unless legislation regulating Haredi conscription was passed on their terms, ultimately confined their response to exiting the government without precipitating its collapse.

Against this backdrop, and in an effort to strengthen his position within the domestic political arena, Netanyahu requested that the head of state, Isaac Herzog, grant him a pardon. In 2025, his trial once again intensified Israel's political and social tensions, as proceedings resumed in the Jerusalem District Court, obliging Netanyahu to appear several days a week for extended hearings.

On 30/11/2025, Netanyahu's lawyers submitted a letter to the President of Israel requesting a pardon for charges against him in three cases involving corruption, bribery, and breach of trust. The 13-page request was accompanied by a brief personal note in which Netanyahu set out his justification. In this note, he stated, "despite my personal interest to conduct the trial and prove my innocence until I'm fully acquitted, I am of the belief that the public interest dictates otherwise," adding, "As part of my public responsibility as prime minister to bring about reconciliation among parts of the nation, I have no doubt that ending the trial will help lower the flames in the debate around it." Furthermore, he wrote, "Facing Israel's defense challenges and diplomatic opportunities these days, I am committed to do all I can to heal the rifts, achieve unity among the nation and to restore trust in the country's systems, and that's what I expect of all branches of the country to do."[22]

In this context, debate in Israel over the pardon request has coalesced around three principal positions. First, some call on the president to reject the request outright and refrain from considering it, on the grounds that it fails to meet the legal criteria for a pardon, including acknowledgment of the charges and withdrawal from political life.[23] Second, others advocate conditional approval, particularly contingent upon Netanyahu's exit from politics or the suspension of all constitutional reform plans.[24] Third, a further position supports granting the pardon as submitted.

Furthermore, Donald Trump urged the president to grant Netanyahu a pardon, conveying this in a personal letter and reiterating it in an address before the Knesset in October 2025, an unprecedented intervention by a US president in Israel's judicial affairs. This stance appears to have encouraged Netanyahu to submit his request without offering any political or personal concessions, effectively seeking an unconditional pardon, a step without precedent in Israel.

Haredi Conscription

The issue of Haredi conscription during wartime has further deepened the religious–secular divide in Israel; however, it is now framed less in terms of the role of religion in the "state" or public sphere, and more in relation to military service. What was once a debate over equality in bearing the economic burden has thus evolved into a fundamental question of life and death. Accordingly, the divide is no longer between those who serve and work and those who do not. Rather, it has become a sharper cleavage between those who serve and risk being killed, and those who neither serve nor face such risks, while continuing to benefit from extensive "state"-provided economic privileges. In this sense, the divide is no longer a conventional distinction between religious and non-religious groups; instead, it reflects a new alignment centered on military service, one that nonetheless intersects with the broader question of religion and the "state."

The question of military service for the ultra-Orthodox has thus emerged as a central political fault line, threatening to rupture the already fragile connection between the Haredi religious community and broader Israeli society. Moreover, the transformations brought about by the war have rendered this divide increasingly unsustainable, leaving little space for postponement or ambiguity and instead necessitating a clear legal resolution. However, any such resolution is likely to carry significant political and social consequences, further deepening existing cleavages. On the one hand, the Haredi community is expected to reject any legislation imposing compulsory military service in a comprehensive manner. On the other hand, opponents are equally unlikely to accept a legal framework that exempts the Haredim or continues to accommodate their current arrangements.

The issue of conscripting Haredi religious communities into the military became a central political and social question in 2025, largely as a result of the war in GS. The debate has not been confined to its military dimension alone; rather, it extends to broader social and economic implications as well. Netanyahu has continued to manage this issue through incremental political maneuvering without reaching a decisive resolution, primarily in order to accommodate religious parties and to signal that he is removing obstacles to advancing relevant legislation. This approach included, first, the dismissal of former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who had supported the implementation of large-scale enlistment of Haredim

alongside sanctions on draft evaders; and second, the removal of Yuli Edelstein from the chairmanship of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, after he drafted legislation mandating Haredi conscription. In their place, Netanyahu appointed two figures closely aligned with him to oversee the file: Israel Katz as Defense Minister and Boaz Bismuth as chair of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. Both are broadly aligned with Netanyahu's positions and, in general, do not adopt independent stances, particularly on this issue.

In managing this issue without resolving it, the government moved to dismiss the government's legal advisor, who had opposed legislation aligned with the demands of religious parties; however, this decision was subsequently annulled by the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, the issue of Haredi conscription is poised to feature prominently in the forthcoming elections, with the opposition likely to frame it as a central campaign issue. In this regard, the opposition holds a relative advantage in advocating Haredi enlistment, with some voices even calling for the revocation of voting rights for those who do not perform military or civilian service. Reflecting the salience of this issue, a new political party, "The Reservists," has emerged, contesting the elections on this basis. By contrast, Aluf Benn, editor-in-chief of *Haaretz*, contends that, despite the surrounding public discourse, secular Israelis are not deeply mobilized around this issue and have not engaged in sustained protest. He attributes this to a prevailing inclination to preserve an unwritten social contract with the Haredim, "we pay you, and you leave us alone," whereby secular citizens finance their basic livelihoods in exchange for the non-imposition of religious norms and the maintenance of social separation between the two communities.[25]

Netanyahu recognizes that the Haredi parties have little alternative but to remain aligned with him, as they would likely be excluded from any opposition-led government. Accordingly, despite their formal withdrawal from the coalition and the resignation of their ministers in 2025, they have, over the past three years, avoided precipitating the government's collapse. In this context, the government has sought to extend mandatory military service by six months and to double the duration of reserve duty. According to an analysis by the Bank of Israel, the conscription of 7,500 Haredi youths in 2026 would reduce annual market losses by approximately 9 billion shekels (about $2.8 billion). Moreover, if such measures

also increase their participation in the labor market, the economy could gain an estimated 14 billion shekels (about $4.3 billion) annually.[26]

The United Torah Judaism list announced its withdrawal from both the government and the governing coalition following Netanyahu's repeated failure to enact legislation on Haredi conscription in line with its demands.[27] By contrast, the religious Shas movement also withdrew from the government on the same grounds, yet chose to remain within the coalition and to retain its leadership of Knesset committees. Moreover, Shas signaled that it would refrain from cooperating with the opposition to bring down the government in order to facilitate a ceasefire agreement, which it supports, thereby affording Netanyahu additional time to formulate new legislation on Haredi conscription after his earlier failure to do so.[28]

Boaz Bismuth, chair of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, has introduced a bill on the conscription of the Haredim that largely reflects the demands of Haredi parties. Crucially, the "proposed law does not establish a general and equal enlistment duty" and raises the exemption age to 26. Consequently, it not only facilitates the avoidance of military service among Haredim but also constrains their integration into the labor market. Furthermore, the bill does not impose stringent penalties on draft evasion.[29] Nevertheless, Haredi parties continue to deem the proposal inadequate; accordingly, its submission for a Knesset vote has been postponed on multiple occasions. Although Netanyahu has repeatedly sought to circumvent this impasse, such efforts have merely delayed the crisis rather than resolved it.

An IDI survey conducted in July 2025 indicates that 84.5% of non-Haredi Jews support the imposition of sanctions on Haredim who evade compulsory military service. This position also commands substantial support within the voters of right-wing parties in the governing coalition, including approximately 72.5% of Likud voters, 76.5% of Religious Zionism voters, and 84% of Otzma Yehudit voters.[30] Accordingly, this issue not only poses a challenge to the government's internal cohesion but may also have significant implications for its electoral prospects. This is particularly evident given that the opposition includes right-wing actors supportive of Haredi conscription, most notably Naftali Bennett, who may attract voters from the right should the government fail to advance legislation perceived as acceptable to Israelis who serve in the military.

In addition, pressure to legislate Haredi conscription has intensified following the army's decision to institute a fixed annual reserve duty of 60–70 days, alongside its announcement of a requirement for 12 thousand additional soldiers, including 6–7 thousand combat troops. Consequently, the issue has become central to the political agenda even in the aftermath of the war in GS.

Key Projections for the 2026 Internal Political Scene

1. Netanyahu is expected to succeed in maintaining his governing coalition, securing the passage of the state budget, and proceeding with elections as scheduled in October 2026.
2. The forthcoming Israeli elections are likely to be marked by an unprecedented level of political polarization. Competition is expected to center on maximizing voter turnout within both the opposition and the coalition, particularly given anticipated increases in participation among Palestinians in the 1948 occupied territories.
3. The electoral agenda is expected to be predominantly domestically oriented, with particular emphasis on the status of Palestinians within Israel and broader questions concerning the state's identity and political system. Notably, the very essence of the "state" itself is likely to emerge as a central electoral issue. In this context, right-wing actors are expected to intensify anti-Palestinian rhetoric, while debates over constitutional restructuring, the role of the judiciary, and Haredi conscription are set to occupy a prominent place in the campaign.
4. Should voter turnout among Palestinians rise to 65–70%, coupled with the formation of a unified Arab list encompassing all Arab parties, it is unlikely that any political bloc would be able to secure a governing majority. In such a context, two main scenarios are plausible: either new elections would be called, or the opposition would seek to form an alternative government with the support of Arab Knesset members, either through formal coalition participation or external parliamentary backing.
5. The government is expected to continue advancing legislation that reconfigures the balance of power among the three branches of government, while also pursuing additional laws as part of its broader effort to reshape the core features of the political system.

Second: Demographic Indicators

The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) estimated that the population of Israel at the end of 2025 reached about 10.177 million, of whom 7.297 million were Jews, accounting for 71.7% of the total. This compares with about 10.055 million at the end of 2024, including 7.23 million Jews, or 71.9%. By contrast, the Arab population, including residents of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, was estimated in 2025 at about 2.147 million, up from about 2.104 million in 2024, representing 21.1% of the population (see table 3/5). If the residents of East Jerusalem (about 405 thousand)[31] and the Golan Heights (about 25 thousand) are excluded, the Palestinian population of the 1948 occupied territories falls to about 1.717 million in 2025, or about 16.9% of the total.

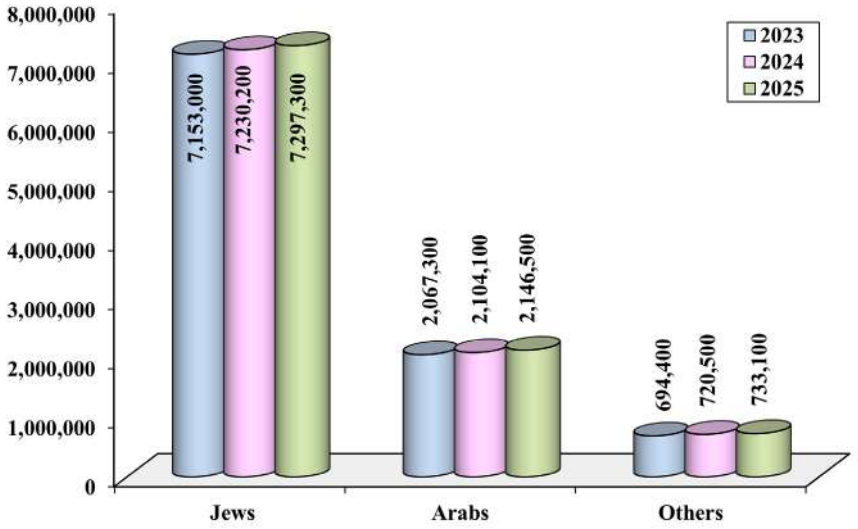
In 2025, the CBS classified about 733 thousand people as "others," or 7.2%, compared to about 721 thousand in 2024. These "others" are mostly immigrants from Russia, the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe who are not recognized as Jews, identify Judaism as a nationality rather than a religious affiliation, or who are non-Jews or non-Arab Christians.

According to the CBS, Jerusalem is the largest city in "Israel" (occupied Palestine), and its population represents 10.4% of the total population in Israel. The population of Jerusalem at the end of 2024 was about 1.046 million, including about 595.3 thousand Jewish settlers and about 399.6 thousand Palestinians, or about 38.2%, and about 51.4 thousand foreigners.[32] According to Israeli estimates, the number of Jewish settlers in WB, including East Jerusalem, is about 845 thousand settlers in 2023 compared to about 800 thousand in 2021. The WestBankJewishPopulationStats.com indicates that the growth rate of settlers rose to 2.5% in 2022 and 3% in 2023. On this basis, and assuming comparable growth over the subsequent two years, the settler population is projected to reach about 896 thousand in 2025. In comparison, ARIJ estimates the settler population at about 870 thousand at the end of 2024.[33]

Table 3/5: Population of Israel – Selected Years[34]

Year	Total	Jews	Arabs (including East Jerusalem and Golan)	Others
2005	6,990,700	5,313,800	1,377,100	299,800
2010	7,695,100	5,802,400	1,573,100	319,600
2015	8,463,400	6,334,500	1,757,800	371,100
2020	9,289,800	6,873,900	1,957,300	458,600
2021	9,453,000	6,982,600	1,997,800	472,500
2022	9,662,000	7,101,400	2,038,800	521,900
2023	9,914,700	7,153,000	2,067,300	694,400
2024	10,054,800	7,230,200	2,104,100	720,500
2025	10,176,900	7,297,300	2,146,500	733,100

Population of Israel 2023–2025



In January 2025, a report by the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel indicated that the Jewish population growth rate in Israel declined, for the first time, to below 1%, reaching about 0.9% in 2025. Alex Weinreb, Director of Research at the Center, attributed this trend to rising mortality, declining immigration, and lower fertility rates.[35] According to CBS, the overall population growth rate in Israel stood at about 1.21% in 2025. This included a growth rate of about 0.9% among Jews, compared with about 2.02% among Arabs, including residents of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights (see table 3/5).

According to 2025 statistics of the CBS and the Jewish Virtual Library, the average life expectancy in Israel reached 81.4 years for men and 85.5 years for women, reflecting a continued increase over previous years. Accordingly, Israel ranks fourth globally in life expectancy, after Switzerland, Japan and Spain. Of the Jewish population, 42.7% of Jews self-identify as secular, 33.5% as traditional, 12% as religious, and 11.4% as ultra-Orthodox.[36]

As for fertility rates, in 2024 the rate among Jewish women living in Israel and WB settlements stood at 3.06 children per woman, while among Muslim women it reached 2.75, bringing the overall fertility rate in Israel to about 2.86. This rate has, however, followed a downward trajectory in recent years, declining from 3.17 children per woman in 2018 to 3.03 in 2022. Notably, most of this decrease has been concentrated in the Arab population, particularly among Sunni Muslims (from 3.2 to 2.91), Druze (from 2.16 to 1.85), and Christians (from 2.06 to 1.68). It is also noteworthy that 2018 marked the first-time fertility among Jewish women surpassed that of Arab women.[37]

1948 Palestinians

It should be noted that Israeli statistics include Palestinians from East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights with the 1948 Palestinians; and this should be taken into consideration. As for the religious distribution of the 1948 Palestinians, as of the end of 2024, there are about 1.816 million Muslims (Sunnis) (86%), about 153 thousand Druze (7.2%) and about 143 thousand Christians (6.8%).[38]

The 1948 Palestinian community has endured significant hardships due to the spread of crime, organized crime and the proliferation of unlicensed weapons. They have also faced challenges from the inaction of responsible authorities and the collusion of the Israeli police with criminal gangs, in what appears to be part of

an undeclared Israeli effort to generate an expulsive environment for Palestinians. Furthermore, since the formation of the far-right Israeli government at the end of 2022, rates of homicide, violence and criminal activity have risen sharply and without precedent within the Arab Palestinian community in Israel. According to the 2025 annual report of the Aman Center – The Arab Center for Safe Society, the number of victims of violence and crime in Arab society reached 267, amounting to a homicide every 33 hours. This represents an unprecedented peak since 1948, compared with 239 victims recorded in 2024. Moreover, about three-quarters of the victims were aged between 18 and 39. The report also shows that 91.6% were male, while 54.8% of the incidents occurred during daytime hours, thereby underscoring the increasingly public and overt nature of violent crime.[39]

In parallel, incitement within Israeli circles against Palestinians of 1948, and against Palestinians more broadly, has risen to alarming levels. According to the Racism and Incitement Index 2024, which monitors Hebrew-language public online discourse and was published by 7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media in March 2025, more than 12 million inciting and violent posts in Hebrew were documented, particularly on the platforms X and Facebook, at an average of 23.6 posts per minute. Furthermore, the Racism and Incitement Index 2023 documented "over 10 million instances of violent content in Hebrew across three major social media platforms. Notably, three-quarters of this troubling content was found on X (formerly Twitter)."[40]

Among the most notable policies pursued by the Israeli government has been the expanding distribution of firearms among Jewish Israelis. Data reported by *Haaretz* newspaper indicate that the number of gun permits in Israel reached 329,827 in March 2025, up from 172,384 prior to October 2023. "There are also the guns held by members of the security forces and the tens of thousands held by security guards, who have permits." Furthermore, between January 2024 and March 2025, a total of 121,732 gun permits were issued, compared with 54,984 in 2023 (including 19,822 granted following Operation al-Aqsa Flood). By contrast, the number of licenses issued in 2022 stood at 12,907, highlighting the sharp acceleration in civilian armament.[41]

Jewish Immigration

According to CBS, 20,734 immigrants arrived in Israel in 2025, compared with 31,068 in 2024 and 46,069 in 2023, thus reflecting a marked decline in the

aftermath of Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the erosion of the Israeli community's sense of security and stability. This downturn follows a notable surge in Jewish immigration, which reached 74,807 arrivals in 2022, largely driven by the migration of Russian and Ukrainian Jews amid the ongoing war there (see table 4/5). By contrast, the Jewish Virtual Library and the Ministry of Immigration reported about 21,900 arrivals in Israel in 2025.[42]

Official Israeli statistics indicate that the cumulative number of immigrants to Israel since its establishment in 1948 has reached about 3.4 million,[43] of whom 46.2% arrived following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990.[44] These figures point to relative stability in immigration rates during 2005–2023; however, they remain significantly lower than those recorded in the final decade of the twentieth century, after the main Jewish demographic reservoirs willing to migrate at scale were largely exhausted, and as diaspora Jewish populations became concentrated in advanced economies in North America and Europe, where incentives for large-scale emigration are limited.

There is also significant Israeli secrecy surrounding Jewish reverse migration from Israel abroad. Available indicators suggest that about 550 thousand people emigrated during the first six months of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, alongside a growing willingness among large segments of the Jewish population to leave Israel if circumstances allow.[45] Furthermore, according to CBS data, which should be treated with caution given Israeli policies that obscure actual emigration figures, about 83 thousand people left Israel in 2024, followed by about 69 thousand in 2025.[46] In addition, CBS recorded a net migration deficit of about 50.3 thousand in 2025.[47]

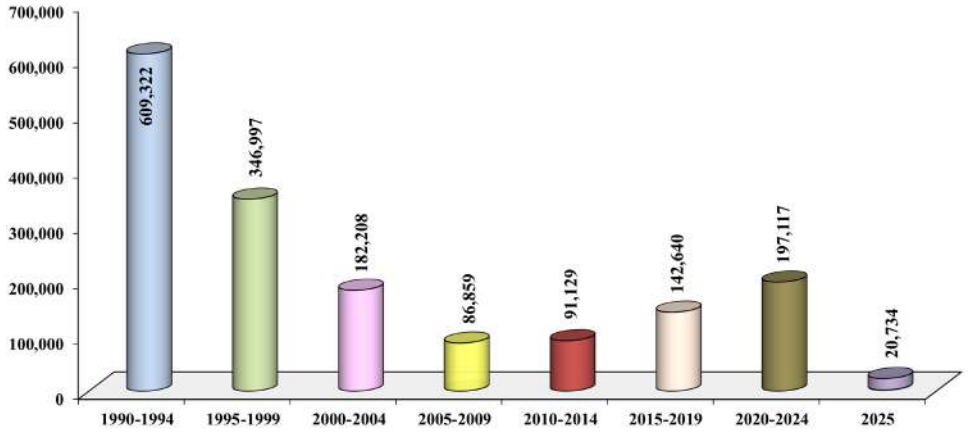
Table 4/5: Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2025[48]

Year	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000–2004	2005–2009	2010–2014
No. of Immigrants	609,322	346,997	182,208	86,859	91,129

Year	2015–2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
No. of Immigrants	142,640	19,676	25,497	74,807	46,069	31,068	20,734	**1,677,006**

The following chart shows the evolution of the number of Jewish immigrants to Israel for every five-year period from 1990–2024, except for 2025.

Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2025



World Jewish Population

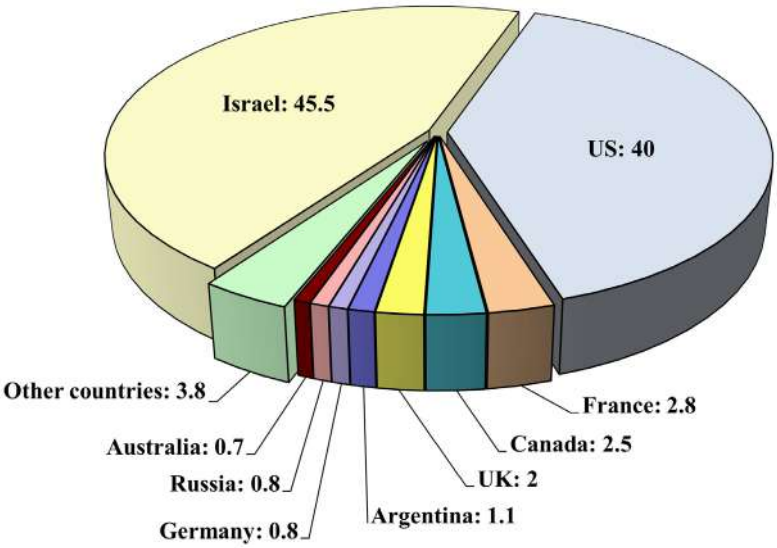
The world Jewish population was estimated at about 15.737 million in 2024, the vast majority of whom reside in the US and Israel, according to demographer Sergio DellaPergola. This estimate reflects a downward revision compared with 2022–2023 figures, following the adoption of revised criteria for determining residency in Israel and abroad. In 2024, about 7.15 million Jews lived in Israel, accounting for 45.5% of the global total, while the US accounted for about 6.3 million (40%). The remainder was distributed across France, Canada, the UK, and other countries (see table 5/5). Moreover, about 27 thousand Jews reside in countries with Muslim majorities, including about 15 thousand in Türkiye, 9 thousand in Iran, and about two thousand in Morocco.[49]

There is, however, divergence among specialized Jewish sources in estimating the size of the Jewish population, a variation that is primarily attributable to the definitional ambiguity of who qualifies as Jewish. Nevertheless, such discrepancies do not alter the broader demographic picture, namely a relatively small global population that is highly concentrated, by more than 85%, in two countries, alongside generally slow population growth.

Table 5/5: World Jewish Population by Country 2024[50]

Country	Israel	US	France	Canada	UK	Argentina	Germany	Russia	Australia	Other countries	Total
Estimates (thousands)	7,153	6,300	439	400	313	170	125	123	117	596.8	**15,736.8**
Percentage (%)	45.5	40	2.8	2.5	2	1.1	0.8	0.8	0.7	3.8	**100**

World Jewish Population by Country 2024 (%)



Third: Economic Indicators

Israel's economy is generally characterized by relatively advanced levels of development compared with prevailing living standards and economic conditions across the Middle East. However, this position relies in part on the exploitation of Palestinian land, resources and people, in addition to benefiting from US support and influence in Western countries. Moreover, it has drawn advantage from the absence of formal Arab security threats and from normalization with several Arab states. However, Operation al-Aqsa Flood has had adverse repercussions on the Israeli economy, undermining its prior stability and sense of security. Consequently, GDP growth has slowed, while public debt has increased and the fiscal deficit has

widened, driven by higher military and security expenditures and the mounting costs of war.

The repercussions of Operation al-Aqsa Flood have been clearly reflected in Israel's economic activity, leading to widespread business closures, capital flight and disruptions in key sectors, particularly tourism and maritime transport. According to a report by the Israeli outlet Wasla for Economy and Business, citing government data, about 60 thousand companies and small and medium-sized enterprises closed in 2024, marking a 50% increase compared with previous years.[51] Furthermore, in September 2024, Calcalist reported that major investors had transferred about $40 billion out of Israel since 7/10/2023.[52] Notably, the Norway Wealth Fund, the Danish Teachers' Pension Fund, and the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) were among the most prominent entities to withdraw investments. In addition, several countries—most notably Türkiye, Spain, the Netherlands and Ireland also withdrew their investments, among others.[53]

Inbound tourism declined by more than 70% in 2024 compared with 2023, and by over 80–90% relative to 2019, which is regarded as the peak year for tourism in Israel. In addition, official data from the Israel Hotel Association indicated a 58.5% drop in visitor numbers compared with 2023.[54] In a related logistical context, the Port of Eilat was severely affected by the Red Sea blockade, such that its annual revenues fell from about 240 million shekels (about $76 million) in 2023 to nearly zero in 2025, according to Ynet Global.[55]

GDP

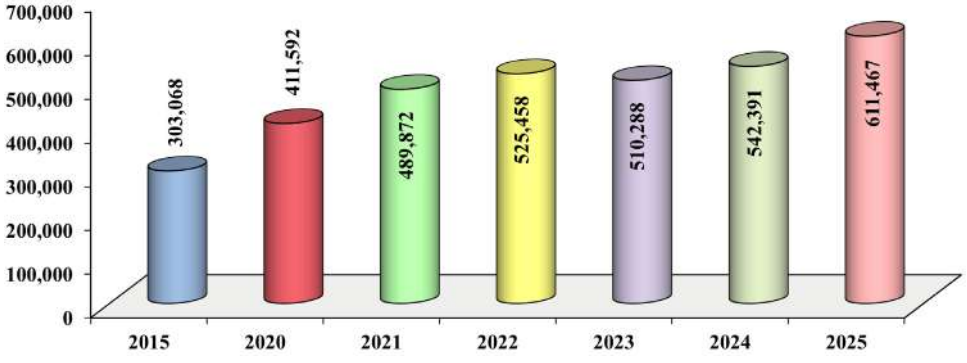
There is a structural problem in relying on official Israeli statistics to assess economic performance, given that data from CBS tend to present GDP in a positively framed manner, as though Israel were experiencing stable and steadily expanding economic conditions. However, this portrayal is not consistent with numerous Israeli reports highlighting the heavy costs of war, disruptions in tourism and broader economic activity, as well as capital flight and declining investment. Furthermore, a notable discrepancy emerges between CBS data and those of the Bank of Israel. While the latter reports GDP growth of 0.9% in 2023 and 1.8% in 2024, the CBS indicates growth of 6.7% in 2023 and 6.6% in 2024. Accordingly, these Israeli figures are presented here in the interest of academic accuracy; nevertheless, they should be treated with considerable caution.

The Israeli CBS estimated GDP at about 2,111 billion shekels (about $611 billion) in 2025, compared to about 2,006 billion shekels (about $542 billion) in 2024 and about 1,883 billion shekels (about $510 billion) in 2023. Accordingly, GDP growth in local currency terms reached 5.2% in 2025, 6.6% in 2024 and 6.7% in 2023. However, when measured in dollar terms and taking into account fluctuations in the shekel exchange rate, growth stood at 12.7% in 2025 and 6.3% in 2024, while it declined by 2.9% in 2023 compared to the preceding year (see table 6/5).

Table 6/5: Israeli GDP 2015 and 2020–2025 at Current Prices[56]

Year	GDP (million shekels)	GDP ($ million)	Shekel exchange rate (according to Bank of Israel)
2015	1,177,086	303,068	3.8839
2020	1,414,517	411,592	3.4367
2021	1,581,943	489,872	3.2293
2022	1,764,332	525,458	3.3577
2023	1,882,809	510,288	3.6897
2024	2,006,304	542,391	3.699
2025	2,111,333	611,467	3.4529

Israeli GDP 2015 and 2020–2025 at Current Prices ($ million)



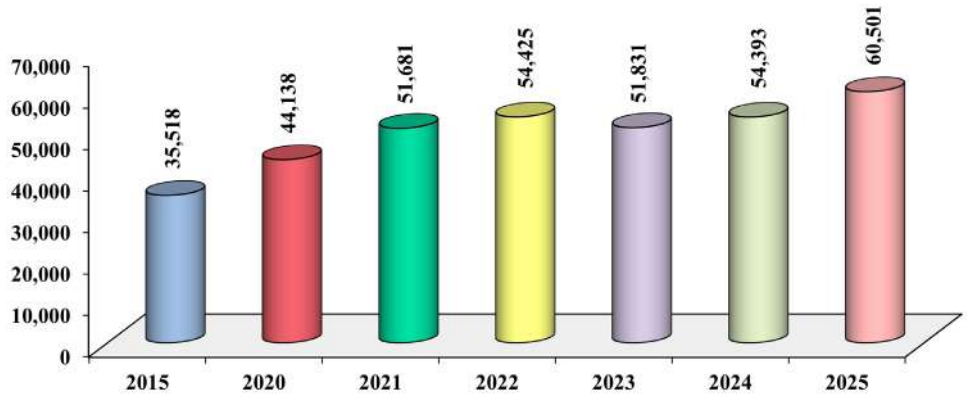
GDP per Capita

The statistics indicate that Israel's GDP per capita in 2025 reached about 208,904 shekels (about $61 thousand), compared with about 201,200 shekels (about $54 thousand) in 2024 and 191,241 shekels (about $52 thousand) in 2023. Accordingly, growth in local currency terms stood at 3.8% in 2025, 5.2% in 2024, and 4.7% in 2023. However, when measured in dollar terms, and due to fluctuations in the shekel–dollar exchange rate, the trend differs: GDP per capita rose by 11.2% in 2025 and by 4.9% in 2024, while it declined by 4.8% in 2023 compared with the preceding year. Hence, caution is warranted when drawing firm conclusions, as relying solely on local currency figures is insufficient without accounting for exchange-rate volatility against the dollar (see table 7/5).

Table 7/5: Israeli GDP per Capita 2015 and 2020–2025 at Current Prices[57]

Year	GDP per capita (shekels)	GDP per capita ($)
2015	137,948	35,518
2020	151,689	44,138
2021	166,895	51,681
2022	182,743	54,425
2023	191,241	51,831
2024	201,200	54,393
2025	208,904	60,501

Israeli GDP per Capita 2015 and 2020–2025 at Current Prices ($)



Poverty Indicators

The 2025 annual poverty report issued by the Israeli organization Latet indicated that, according to NII, the poverty line stands at about $1,293 per person per month. It further estimated that about 870 thousand families (26.9%) in Israel were experiencing food insecurity, reflecting an increase of 27.5% compared with 2024. Moreover, 91.1% of elderly aid recipients were unable to afford the home care or assistance they require. In addition, in 41% of assisted families, at least one child was compelled to enter the labor market. Notably, about 24.3% of aid recipients began seeking food assistance following Operation al-Aqsa Flood.[58]

Meanwhile, the annual poverty report issued by the NII in January 2026 set the poverty line for 2024 at 3,547 shekels (about $1,130). It indicated that about two million individuals in Israel live below the poverty line, including about 880 thousand children and about 159 thousand elderly persons, corresponding to poverty rates of 20.7% among individuals and 20% among households. Moreover, the report found that poverty rate reached 37.6% among Arabs, compared with 32.8% among non-Haredi Jews.[59]

Israeli Government Budget

Figure from the Israeli Ministry of Finance indicate that the original budget for 2025 was set at about $179.3 billion; however, cumulative payment rose to about $188.4 billion, with the revised budget likewise standing at about $197.6 billion. By comparison, cumulative payment in 2024 reached about $167.9 billion, whereas the revised budget stood at about $176.2 billion.[60]

Moreover, Ministry of Finance figures show that Ministry of Defense expenditures amounted to about $47.9 billion in 2025, compared with about $45.6 billion in 2024. This represents an increase of about $23 billion over the originally approved defense budget for 2024, largely driven by Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the war on GS.[61]

By contrast, total cumulative receipts in 2025 amounted to about $159.8 billion, compared with about $131.1 billion in 2024 (see table 8/5). Ministry data further indicate that a substantial share of these receipts was generated from income tax, which reached about $87.7 billion in 2025, up from about $69 billion in 2024, within the overall revenue total in each year.[62]

Table 8/5: Budget Performance of Israeli Government Receipts and Payments 2023–2025, According to Ministry of Finance ($ million)[63]

	2023		2024		2025	
	Original budget	Cumulative receipts and payments	Original budget	Cumulative receipts and payments	Original budget	Cumulative receipts and payments
Receipts grand total*	126,616	118,871	134,664	131,109	149,752	159,831
Payments grand total**	131,192	139,869	138,686	167,924	179,259	188,387
Deficit (cumulative) (%)	–17.7		–28.1		–17.9	

* Total receipts exclude loan principal repayments.

**Total payments exclude lending / granted loans.

According to CBS, the approved total payments in the approved budget for 2024 amounted to 736.342 billion shekels (about $199.1 billion), whereas total budget performance reached about 706.2 billion shekels (about $191.4 billion) in 2023.[64]

The budget is distributed across three main components. First, the Ordinary Budget covers expenditures related to the presidency, the prime minister's office, ministries, and related administrative bodies. Second, there is the development budget alongside debt repayment. Third, the budget allocated to business enterprises. From the 2023 budget performance, the Ordinary Budget amounted to about 497.731 billion shekels (about $134.9 billion). Within this, defense spending reached 100.773 billion shekels (about $27.3 billion), while public security accounted for 23.705 billion shekels (about $6.4 billion). Human capital-related expenditure stood at 98.295 billion shekels (about $26.6 billion) for education, 77.754 billion shekels (about $21.1 billion) for social welfare, and 55.397 billion shekels (about $15 billion) for health. Notably, debt repayment represented a significant fiscal burden, absorbing 105.471 billion shekels (about $28.6 billion) in 2023, compared with 126.565 billion shekels (about $37.69 billion) in 2022, reflecting substantial fiscal rigidities in the expenditure structure.[65]

In contrast, total receipts for 2023 was 711.879 billion shekels (about $192.9 billion), compared to 655.07 billion shekels (about $195.1 billion) in 2022. Much of this revenue comes from income tax (207.2 billion shekels, about

$56.2 billion) and value-added tax (121.03 billion shekels, about $32.8 billion) as outlined in the 2023 budget performance.[66]

There may be some discrepancies and confusion among researchers due to the varying statistics and figures issued by Israeli official bodies. This is often because of the lack of precise definitions for terms such as the grand total budget or the regular budget; and the budget approved by the government, the budget approved by the Knesset and the actual updated budget of revenues and expenditures at the end of the fiscal year.

According to the Bank of Israel, the public debt rose to about 68% of GDP, compared with 62% at the end of 2023. Moreover, military and security expenditures, along with civilian needs, increased significantly; consequently, the 2024 budget was revised three times during the year. The additional spending was financed primarily through a widening deficit, which reached about 6.8% of GDP in 2024.[67]

According to the Israeli Ministry of Finance, the budget deficit in 2025 reached 4.7% of GDP, despite a 13.8% increase in revenues.[68] Meanwhile, the "State of the Nation 2025" report by the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel indicates that the debt-to-GDP ratio to 70%, largely driven by the sharp increase in military expenditure during the war.[69] In this context, war spending on the GS amounted to about 91 billion shekels ($28.9 billion) in 2025, excluding compensation. Since 7/10/2023, total war expenditures have reached about 232.4 billion shekels ($73.8 billion), in addition to about 33 billion shekels ($10.5 billion) allocated as compensation for Israelis killed in the 7 October attack, according to the Ministry of Finance. By contrast, the Bank of Israel estimated the overall cost of the war at about $100 billion.[70]

The Governor of the Bank of Israel, Amir Yaron, warned in his testimony before the Knesset Finance Committee at the beginning of 2026 of direct fiscal risks should the Knesset adopt the prime minister's proposal to add about $100 billion to the defense budget over the coming decade, as this would raise the debt-to-GDP ratio to 80%.[71]

Furthermore, the general budget for 2026 is expected to reach about 662 billion shekels ($206 billion), with a deficit ceiling of 3.9% of GDP. Notably, defense spending is projected to increase significantly to 112 billion shekels ($35 billion), reflecting an increase of 47 billion shekels ($15 billion) compared to the 2023 budget prior to the outbreak of the war on GS.[72]

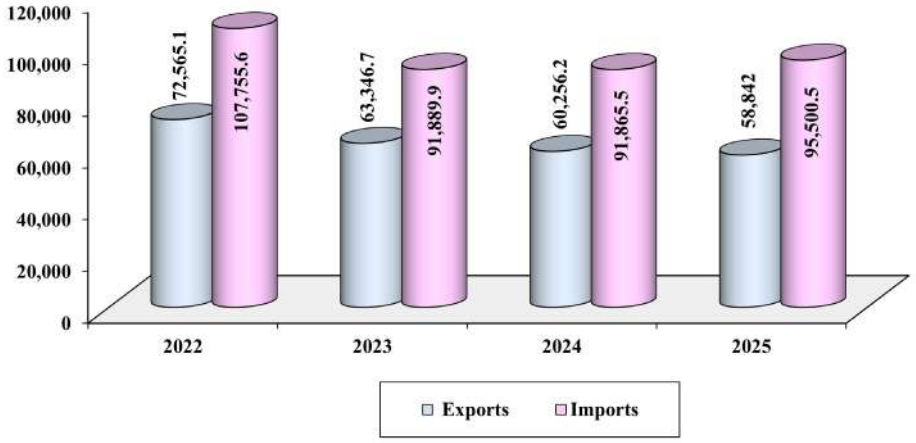
Exports and Imports

In 2025, Israeli exports totaled $58.8 billion, down from $60.3 billion in 2024 and $63.3 billion in 2023, representing a 2.3% decline in 2025 following a 4.9% decrease in 2024. By contrast, imports in 2025 reached $95.5 billion, up from $91.87 billion in 2024 and $91.89 billion in 2023, reflecting a 3.96% increase in 2025, after a marginal decline of 0.03% in 2024 (see table 9/5). It should be noted that these figures exclude foreign trade in services for both imports and exports, and that the percentages are calculated in US dollars rather than shekels.

Table 9/5: Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2022–2025 at Current Prices[73]

		Exports	Imports	Deficit (%)
2022	**Million shekels**	243,749.8	361,801.4	–48.4
	$ Million	72,565.1	107,755.6	
2023	**Million shekels**	233,296.1	338,155.2	–45.1
	$ Million	63,346.7	91,889.9	
2024	**Million shekels**	222,829.3	339,585.5	–52.5
	$ Million	60,256.2	91,865.5	
2025	**Million shekels**	202,885	329,123.6	–62.3
	$ Million	58,842	95,500.5	

Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2022–2025 at Current Prices ($ million)



The US continues to hold its established position as Israel's leading trading partner. In 2025, Israeli exports to the US reached about $16.15 billion, accounting for 27.4% of total exports, compared with about $17.12 billion in 2024 (28.4% of all Israeli exports). Meanwhile, imports from the US amounted to about $9.5 billion in 2025, representing 9.98% of total Israeli imports, compared with about $9.2 billion in 2024, or 10%. In this context, Israel continues to partially offset its broader trade deficits through a sustained surplus with the US, which stood at about $6.6 billion in 2025 and $7.9 billion in 2024, thereby providing a significant buffer for the Israeli economy (see table 10/5).

China ranked as Israel's second-largest trading partner. Israeli exports to China stood at about $2.81 billion in 2025, compared with about $2.83 billion in 2024, whereas imports from China rose to about $14.7 billion in 2025 from about $13.5 billion in 2024. Germany ranked third, with total trade reaching about $9.5 billion in 2025, up from about $8.68 billion in 2024. Meanwhile, the Netherlands and Switzerland occupied fourth and fifth positions in 2025, with trade volumes of about $6.8 billion and $5.9 billion respectively. In parallel, Hong Kong advanced from twelfth place in 2023 to sixth place in both 2024 and 2025, recording trade of about $5.8 billion and $5.1 billion respectively (see table 10/5).

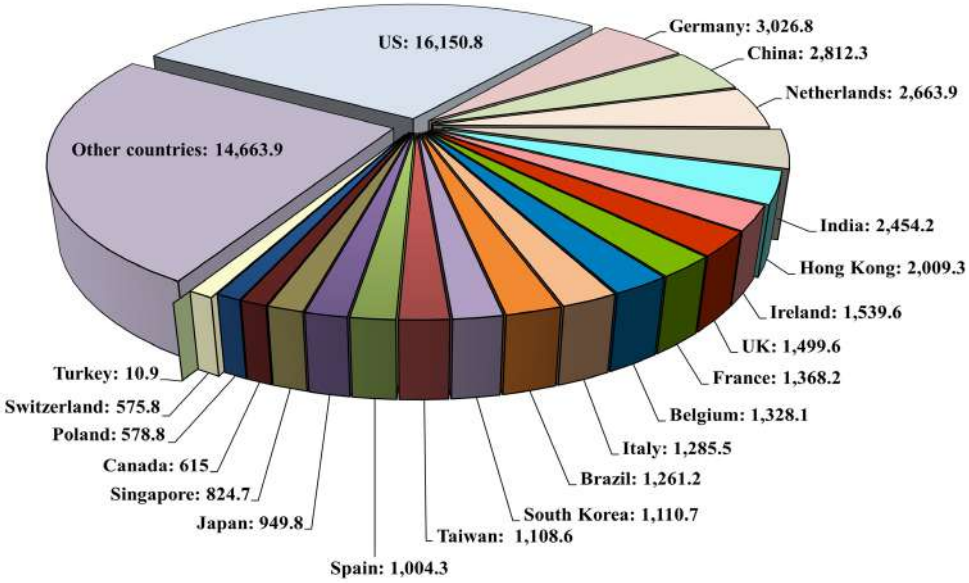
Türkiye, meanwhile, declined from fifth place in 2023 to 23rd place, as the volume of trade fell to about $935 million in 2025, down from about $6.2 billion in 2023. This sharp contraction reflects Türkiye's measures to suspend trade relations with Israel in response to its war on GS (see table 10/5).

In addition, the main destinations for Israeli exports in 2025 included India ($2.45 billion), Ireland ($1.54 billion), UK ($1.5 billion), and France ($1.4 billion), alongside Belgium and Italy. Conversely, Israel's key import sources in 2025 were Italy ($3.8 billion), Belgium ($2.98 billion), UK ($2.87 billion), South Korea ($2.77 billion), France ($2.58 billion), Ireland ($2.4 billion) and India ($1.84 billion) (see table 10/5).

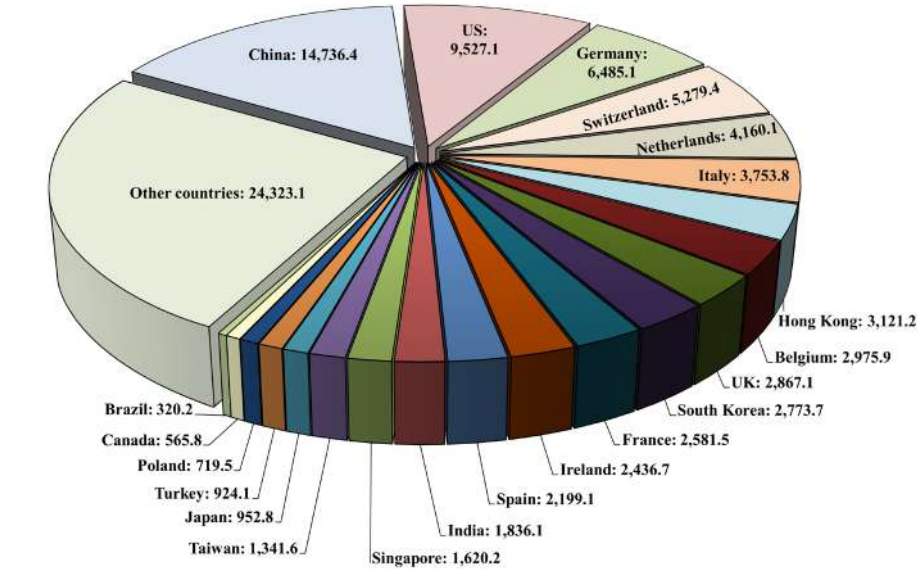
Table 10/5: Volume of Israeli Trade, Exports and Imports with Selected Countries 2024–2025 at Current Prices ($ million)[74]

	Countries	Trade Volume		Israeli exports to:		Israeli imports from:	
		2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024
1	US	25,677.9	26,348.3	16,150.8	17,122.4	9,527.1	9,225.9
2	China	17,548.7	16,360.5	2,812.3	2,831.4	14,736.4	13,529.1
3	Germany	9,511.9	8,676.8	3,026.8	2,277.7	6,485.1	6,399.1
4	Netherlands	6,824	6,486.8	2,663.9	2,702	4,160.1	3,784.8
5	Switzerland	5,855.2	5,185.5	575.8	612.5	5,279.4	4,573
6	Hong Kong	5,130.5	5,833.5	2,009.3	1,984.7	3,121.2	2,848.8
7	Italy	5,039.3	4,633.3	1,285.5	1,183.6	3,753.8	3,449.7
8	UK	4,366.7	4,126	1,499.6	1,527.9	2,867.1	2,598.1
9	Belgium	4,304	4,767.9	1,328.1	1,484.2	2,975.9	3,283.7
10	India	4,290.3	3,901.4	2,454.2	2,211.9	1,836.1	1,689.5
11	Ireland	3,976.3	5,472.1	1,539.6	3,242.6	2,436.7	2,229.5
12	France	3,949.7	4,025.1	1,368.2	1,391	2,581.5	2,634.1
13	South Korea	3,884.4	3,442.2	1,110.7	883.7	2,773.7	2,558.5
14	Spain	3,203.4	3,087.3	1,004.3	941.1	2,199.1	2,146.2
15	Taiwan	2,450.2	2,092.7	1,108.6	946.4	1,341.6	1,146.3
16	Singapore	2,444.9	2,315	824.7	735.5	1,620.2	1,579.5
17	Japan	1,902.6	2,060	949.8	863.8	952.8	1,196.2
18	Brazil	1,581.4	1,602.4	1,261.2	1,147.6	320.2	454.8
19	Poland	1,298.3	981.3	578.8	371.2	719.5	610.1
20	Canada	1,180.8	993.8	615	554.5	565.8	439.3
23	Türkiye	935	2,617.7	10.9	598.6	924.1	2,019.1
Other countries		38,987	37,112.1	14,663.9	14,641.9	24,323.1	23,470.2
Total		**154,342.5**	**152,121.7**	**58,842**	**60,256.2**	**95,500.5**	**91,865.5**

Israeli Exports to Selected Countries 2025 at Current Prices ($ million)



Israeli Imports from Selected Countries 2025 at Current Prices ($ million)



Manufacturing, mining, and quarrying topped the list of Israeli exports for 2024 and 2025, accounting for 94.3% and 94.5% respectively. Israel's net diamond exports amounted to 4.2% in 2024 and 3.6% in 2025, down from 7.7% in 2022, indicating a marked decline in the diamond trade in recent years. Agricultural exports and those relating to forestry and fishing totaled 2.3% and 2.7% in 2024 and 2025 respectively (see table 11/5). The breakdown of industrial exports by technological intensity, high-tech industries accounted for 40.8% of all such exports in 2024, while medium-tech industries accounting for 51.7%, and low-tech industries for 7.5%.[75]

Table 11/5: Israeli Exports by Commodity Group 2022–2025 ($ million)[76]

Year	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Manufacturing, mining & quarrying excl. working diamonds	Working of diamonds & Wholesale of diamonds	Other	Discarded exports	Total
2022	1,091.7	60,592.2	5,149.1	0.4	–348.5	**66,484.8**
2023	1,336.6	55,249.8	2,983.5	0.4	–383	**59,187.3**
2024	1,310.9	53,422.6	2,370.6	0.1	–478.5	**56,625.7**
2025	1,502.2	53,151.3	2,024.7	0.1	–452.2	**56,226.3**

As for Israeli imports, raw materials topped the list in 2024 and 2025, accounting for 43.5% and 45% respectively. Fuel imports amounted to 10.2% in 2024 and 8.3% in 2025. Consumer goods represented 27.3% and 27.8%, while investment goods accounted for 15.7% and 16.3% in the same years. Diamond imports were about 2.5% and 2.1% in 2024 and 2025 respectively (see table 12/5).

Table 12/5: Israeli Imports by Commodity Group 2022–2025 ($ million)[77]

Year	Consumer goods	Raw materials	Investment materials	Fuel	Polished and rough diamonds	Other	Total
2022	25,363.7	45,744.1	14,235.3	14,461.5	5,061.8	1,459.6	**106,326**
2023	22,747.4	38,999.8	14,034.1	10,753.1	3,274.2	658.1	**90,466.7**
2024	24,832.1	39,616.1	14,302.3	9,306.7	2,301.8	619.6	**90,978.6**
2025	26,344.3	42,634.4	15,429.9	7,869.9	2,023.8	540.6	**94,842.9**

US Support

Although Israel is considered a wealthy and developed country, it continues to receive a US annual assistance. Since 2018, this support has increased by about $700 million annually, reaching $3.8 billion per year, of which $3.3 billion allocated for military grants.

Since Operation al-Aqsa Flood, the US Congress has provided emergency supplemental military assistance to Israel and appropriated funding beyond the annual Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) terms for joint US-Israeli missile defense programs. In April 2024, Congress appropriated $3.5 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Israel and $5.2 billion in defense appropriations for missile defense ($4 billion) and Israel's new laser defense system, Iron Beam ($1.2 billion).[78]

In May 2025, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) reported that the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025, specified FY2025 FMF for Off-Shore Procurement for Israel (per the terms of the MOU) at $450.3 million. Moreover, it reauthorized loan guarantees to Israel through 2030; and reauthorized annual monetary caps for US additions to the War Reserve Stockpile for Allies program, including the stockpile in Israel, through FY2027 (at $500 million per year). In addition, the Act provides FMF to Israel ($3.3 billion).[79]

In spring 2025, the Department of Defense released the Base for Reprogramming Actions report, which contained $500 million in missile defense for Israel, $47.5 million for the US-Israeli anti-tunneling program, $55 million for the US-Israeli counter-unmanned aerial systems program (drones), and $20 million for "emerging technologies" cooperation.[80]

Accordingly, total US support provided to Israel over the period 1949–2025 amounts to about $170.79 billion, as reported by CRS.[81]

According to estimates by Brown University, Israel received exceptional US support during its war on GS (October 2023–September 2025), amounting to about $21.7 billion. In addition, the US spent between $9.65 billion and $12.07 billion to assist Israel against its adversaries in its wider region.[82] This underscores the strategic alliance between the two parties and indicates that the US regards Israel as a cornerstone of its policy in the Arab region, or the Middle East. Moreover, US financial and military support proved decisive in the Israeli war on GS.

Table 13/5: US Foreign Aid to Israel 1949–2025 ($ million)[83]

Period	1949–1958	1959–1968	1969–1978	1979–1988	1989–1998	1999–2008
Total	599.6	727.8	11,426.5	29,933.9	31,551.9	29,374.7

Period	2009–2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Grand total
Total	30,878.2	3,800	3,800	3,800	4,800	3,800	12,500	3,800	**170,792.6**

Fourth: Military Indicators

Since its establishment, Israel's security doctrine has been structured around three core pillars: deterrence, early warning, and rapid decisive victory on the adversary's territory, while compensating for limited geographic depth through qualitative and technological superiority as well as external support. However, the war on GS since 7/10/2023 has subjected these foundations to severe stress, exposing significant vulnerabilities in intelligence assessment, force readiness, and coordination between the political and military echelons. In this regard, the repercussions of the war have been reflected in the Israeli military, particularly through a reassessment of combat doctrine, alongside reinforcement of ground forces and reserves and the expansion of preparations for multi-front warfare. At the same time, it has triggered a wave of resignations and reshuffles within senior military ranks, followed by new appointments aimed at restructuring the command hierarchy and reallocating responsibility. Furthermore, the war has resulted in an unprecedented rise in the military budget and accelerated armament and modernization programs, including air defense systems, precision-guided munitions, and manpower development. Collectively, these shifts indicate a comprehensive rethinking of national security doctrine and the instruments through which it is operationalized.

1. Appointments and Structural Changes

The Israeli military's failure to counter Operation al-Aqsa Flood, together with its inability to achieve decisive results or fully occupy GS during the subsequent offensive, was clearly reflected in a series of senior military appointments and reshuffles throughout 2024–2025.

In parallel, significant rifts emerged between the military and political leadership, particularly over the management and continuation of the war in GS. These tensions were further reinforced by a marked decline in mutual trust. On several occasions, the military establishment recommended ending the war and advancing a prisoner exchange deal, warning that its prolongation without a clear timeline or political exit strategy would erode the military gains achieved. This position was supported by then Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant, who also called for the establishment of a formal commission of inquiry into the failures surrounding Operation al-Aqsa Flood, as well as for advancing the conscription of Haredi Jews. Ultimately, these positions contributed to his dismissal on 5/11/2024 and the appointment of Israel Katz in his place.[84]

In this context of escalating political and military tensions, and in light of the repercussions of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, Herzi Halevi concluded his tenure as Chief of General Staff on 6/3/2025[85] and was succeeded by Eyal Zamir, in a move widely interpreted as reflecting an effort by the political leadership to tighten its control over the military establishment.[86]

Subsequently, Halevi's resignation was followed by a series of departures within the senior military command. Most notably, the commander of the Southern Command, Major General Yaron Finkelman, submitted his resignation,[87] while earlier Amir Baram, the deputy Chief of General Staff, had also stepped down.[88]

Moreover, during Halevi's tenure, the military leadership underwent an unprecedented reshuffle of senior positions in the aftermath of Operation al-Aqsa Flood. On 4/3/2024, a new commander was appointed for the Multidimensional "Ghost" Unit, replacing Colonel Roi Levy, who was killed during the operation. In parallel, new commanders were appointed for the Golani Brigade and Gaza Division's Southern Brigade (Katif). This restructuring involved three brigadier generals, 11 colonels and a further 26 colonels who were only moving positions at the same rank.[89]

On 2/5/2024, the Israeli army announced the appointment of Brigadier General Shlomi Binder as head of the Military Intelligence Directorate (Aman), succeeding Aharon Haliva, who had resigned following the failure to counter Operation al-Aqsa Flood,. Furthermore, Brigadier General Avi Bluth was appointed head of Central Command, replacing Major General Yehuda Fox, while Brigadier General

Dan Goldfus was designated commander of the Northern Corps, succeeding Brigadier General Uri Gordin.[90]

The day following Zamir's appointment, the Israeli army announced dozens of changes and promotions within its command structure after more than three months of suspension, pursuant to an order issued by Katz. These measures included the appointment of Brigadier General Ehud Tzur to head the central command headquarters within the Training and Doctrine Command, as well as the designation of Major General Tamir Yadai as Deputy Chief of General Staff.[91] In addition, Colonel Efrat Kaikov was appointed commander of the 213th Artillery Brigade. Furthermore, Colonel Omri Mashiach was appointed commander of Gaza Division's Northern Brigade (Gefen), succeeding Colonel Haim Cohen, who resigned following failures associated with Operation al-Aqsa Flood.[92]

On 23/11/2025, Chief of General Staff Zamir dismissed several reserve force security chiefs on account of their failures during the events of Operation al-Aqsa Flood. This action was undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of Major General Sammy Turgeman's investigation, who had been mandated to review the inquiries conducted into the war.[93]

2. Manpower

The Israeli army comprises approximately 635 thousand personnel, including 170 thousand active personnel and 465 thousand reservists.[94] This reserve force is highly effective, capable of being mobilized within just four days.

Amid sustained attrition and mounting exhaustion within the Israeli army, driven by the protracted war on GS and its expansion to six additional fronts, the army confronted two principal challenges during 2024 and 2025. First, it faced a severe manpower shortage, estimated at about 12 thousand soldiers, including about 9 thousand combat soldiers and about 3 thousand in support roles.[95] Furthermore, the army, projected that about 30% of its senior commanders would leave service in 2026, while also anticipating that about 30% of reservists and career soldiers would not report to their units in the same year; those who do serve are expected to complete between 60 and 70 days of duty.[96] In addition, declining motivation among youth to join combat units has become increasingly evident, with Israeli reports indicating that more than 100 thousand Israelis have ceased reserve service, some citing "ethical" considerations.[97]

Internal Israeli army surveys conducted in 2025 indicate that only 63% of officers expressed interest in continuing military service, compared with 83% in 2018. Similarly, among non-commissioned officers, the rate declined to 37% in 2025 from 58% in 2018.[98]

This erosion in willingness and motivation is primarily linked to the absence of a clear timeframe for ending the war. Moreover, there is a growing perception that its continuation has become an end in itself for the government, with limited consideration of its physical, psychological and economic repercussions for soldiers.

Against the backdrop of this manpower crisis and declining motivation, the psychological impact of the war has become increasingly evident, particularly in the rising incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among Israeli soldiers. Rates have increased by about 40% since 7/10/2023, while official projections indicate that this rise could reach about 180% by 2028. Moreover, the Israeli Ministry of Defense says that of the 22,300 troops or personnel being treated for war wounds, 60% suffer from PTSD.[99] In parallel, these psychological burdens are also reflected in a growing number of suicides within the army. Accordingly, 21 soldiers died by suicide in 2024[100] and 22 in 2025, compared with 17 cases in 2023.[101]

As for the second challenge, it concerns the conscription law for Haredi Jews, which has emerged as a central point of contention within Israeli society, particularly in light of the army's shortage equivalent to a full regular division,[102] including about 1,300 officers at the ranks of lieutenant and captain, as well as 300 majors.[103] This debate gains further significance given that the Haredim constitute about 14% of Israel's population, or about 1.3 million people, including roughly 66 thousand men of military age who are exempt from conscription.[104]

3. Military Plans and Trends

Reflecting a profound shift in Israeli military and security doctrine following Operation al-Aqsa Flood, the evolving strategic outlook signals a redefinition of future threats and responses. According to a report by The Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security (JISS), the recent war exposed the limits of relying exclusively on airpower and intelligence superiority, thereby reinstating the centrality of ground forces as a decisive component in protracted, multi-front

warfare. Consequently, Israel has moved to expand its army and reinforce both its regular and reserve ground forces. In parallel, the military establishment has been restructuring the air force and upgrading its capabilities to secure operational freedom in distant theatres, particularly in response to threats extending from GS to Lebanon and Iran.[105]

The new doctrine is grounded in the integration of advanced technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) as central tools for strengthening qualitative military superiority and deterrence. Within this framework, Israel consolidates the principles of early deterrence and pre-emptive strikes to neutralize emerging threats before they fully materialize, while simultaneously maintaining security control over adjacent arenas and deepening regional and international coordination. Overall, this approach reflects a strategic conviction that swift and decisive action is essential to preserving Israel's strategic edge in the coming years.[106]

In the aftermath of Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the war on GS, a report by INSS called for a comprehensive reassessment of national security concept and military readiness. It recommended strengthening military capabilities through increased investment, restoring the "readiness of the ground forces of the standing army and the reserves," and rebuilding ammunition stockpiles and training systems, while ensuring that the closure of ground units does not proceed without prior strategic review. In addition, the report urged a revision of the combat doctrine, particularly by reducing reliance on "alternatives to decisive victory," and instead reaffirming the need for decisive outcomes when required, alongside the renewed integration of "offensive ground maneuvers." At the defensive and early warning level, it called for preparedness against large-scale military threat scenarios, the reinforcement of homefront and border-area fortifications, and a recalibration of the balance between human and technological intelligence, including the revival of "open-source intelligence Hatzav Unit." Finally, it emphasized that deterrence should be assessed from the enemy's perspective rather than solely through Israel's own strategic assumptions.[107]

Following the conclusion of the "Tnufa" (Momentum) plan, Eyal Zamir unveiled, on 12/1/2026, a new multi-year framework titled "Hoshen," meaning in Hebrew the "a High Priest's breastplate." Covering the period from 2026 to 2030,

the plan is allocated about 350 billion shekels (about $111 billion). At its core, the multi-year plan is structured around "three pillars: readiness for war return to fitness and force-building for future challenges." Under those pillars, there are 12 core efforts that emphasize readiness for routine and surprise wars across all fronts, while also prioritizing the fortification of Israel's borders, in light of the lessons of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, on 7/10/2023. Furthermore, Zamir outlined two parallel efforts for 2026: "the operational use of force across all fronts and a comprehensive force-building drive."[108]

4. Military Maneuvers

Israeli military exercises during 2024 and 2025 reflected a structural shift in both scope and objectives. Rather than routine drills, they became integral to a broader reconfiguration of Israeli military doctrine following the security setback of 7/10/2023, and amid growing prospects of regional confrontation, particularly on the northern front. In this sense, the maneuvers increasingly indicated operational readiness for a multi-front war scenario.

Throughout 2024, military exercises on the northern front with Lebanon intensified markedly. In most cases, they simulated large-scale offensive operations on Lebanese territory, while simultaneously enhancing domestic front readiness. Operationally, these drills focused on the geographic belt adjacent to the Syrian Golan Heights, based on Israeli military assessments concerning the deployment of Hizbullah's Radwan forces in that area. Moreover, the training environments were designed to replicate terrain closely resembling that of southern Lebanon.[109]

On 10/9/2024, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant signaled a shift in the center of gravity toward the north, adding "we are nearing the completion of our missions in the south."[110] This phase of maneuvers was subsequently followed by a large-scale offensive against Lebanon, codenamed "Northern Arrows," conducted between 23/9–27/11/2024.[111]

In 2025, the army had shifted from drawing lessons from 7/10/2023 to testing comprehensive readiness for a multi-front regional war. Accordingly, military exercises were no longer confined to technical training; rather, they served to recalibrate Israel's operational concept and security doctrine.

A key feature of these exercises was the expansion of their geographic scope; drills were conducted simultaneously in the Mediterranean Sea, the occupied Syrian Golan, the Red Sea, WB, border areas with Lebanon, and North Africa. Notably, a joint aerial exercise with the US over the Mediterranean, involving advanced fighter jets, conveyed a direct deterrent message to Iran and underscored the depth of the bilateral military alliance.[112] Furthermore, 2025 marked the Israeli military's participation in the "African Lion" exercises in Morocco.[113]

Concurrently, as part of efforts to enhance military readiness, the 2025 exercises exhibited a higher degree of operational realism, particularly on the northern front.[114] This trend was further consolidated by the establishment of the "Little Lebanon" training facility in the northern Golan, intended to simulate urban combat in southern Lebanese towns in preparation for a potential direct confrontation with Hizbullah.[115]

In light of Israel's escalation on the northern front and its sustained threats toward Hizbullah and Iran, it is likely that in 2026 the Israeli military will transition from testing readiness to the selective application of force. This would likely involve high-intensity, limited operations, or, alternatively, the management of "controlled," or potentially broader, escalation aimed at redefining the rules of engagement within a multi-front war framework, while simultaneously intensifying regional and international exercises.

5. Armaments and Arms Trade

Israeli arms exports reached a record high in 2024; concurrently, the share of imports by Arab Gulf states that have normalized relations increased, notwithstanding the ongoing offensive on GS.

According to the Israeli Ministry of Defense, defense exports rose to about $14.8 billion in 2024, up from $13 billion in 2023. Moreover, the Ministry reported a fourth consecutive year of record-breaking defense agreements, noting that 56.8% of concluded deals were large-scale, each exceeding $100 million.[116]

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Israel maintained its position as the world's eighth largest arms exporter, accounting for about 3.1% of global arms exports over the 2020–2024 period.[117]

Despite international calls in several countries for boycott and isolation, imports of Israeli weaponry continued across multiple regions. In this context, Europe accounted for about 54% of these exports in 2024, up from 35% in 2023, followed by the Asia-Pacific region at 23%. Moreover, the Ministry of Defense reported that arms sales to countries under the Abraham Accords framework, namely the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Morocco, increased from 3% in 2023 to 12% in 2024. By contrast, North America accounted for 9%, while Latin America and Africa each accounted for about 1%.[118]

As for the types of exported weapons, a Ministry of Defense statement indicated that demand for missiles, rockets and air defense systems has "entered a new and significant phase," with these systems accounting for about 48% of exports, up from 36% in 2023. In parallel, exports of satellite and space systems increased to about 8% of 2024 deals compared to 2% in 2023.[119]

With regard to arms imports, Israel ranks as the sixth-largest importer of weapons in the Middle East and the 15th largest globally. Over the 2015–2024 period, annual imports remained broadly stable. Moreover, the US was the principal supplier during 2020–2024, accounting for 66% of total imports, followed by Germany at 33%, according to SIPRI.[120]

Despite the ongoing Israeli war in GS during the period covered by this report, the flow of ammunition and military equipment to Israel has continued. On 19/11/2025, the Ministry of Defense announced that Israel had received about 120 thousand tons of military equipment, munitions, weapon systems, and protective gear since the outbreak of the war, transported via about 1,000 aircraft and 250 maritime vessels.[121]

In this context, several countries have continued to supply arms to Israel, despite official claims by some of them of suspending exports in response to the ongoing war in GS and in light of domestic public pressure. Nevertheless, Israel has sought to reduce its reliance on external imports; accordingly, Netanyahu stated on 24/12/2025 that Israel would spend about $110 billion (350 billion shekels) over the next decade on building "an independent Israeli munitions industry."[122]

The Spanish newspaper Público reported that several European countries continued to conclude arms deals with Israel during 2024. According to annual

reports submitted by several countries under the Treaty on Conventional Arms (TCA), a regulatory mechanism governing the transfer of military equipment that prohibits transactions with governments involved in crimes against humanity, at least five European governments approved arms transactions with Israel in 2024. These governments were the Czech Republic, Serbia, Poland, Greece, and the Netherlands.[123]

Moreover, during the first six months of 2025, Serbia exported ammunition to Israel worth about €55.5 million (about $61 million), according to customs information from a website that collates Serbian business data. This figure exceeds the total value of Serbian military exports to Israel in all of 2024, which itself reached a record €47.9 million (about $52 million), according to a joint investigation by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) and *Haaretz*.[124]

It is worth noting, however, that Israel's military industries incurred losses estimated at billions of dollars during 2024–2025, owing to the cancellation or postponement of arms and military equipment deals. In particular, contracts with Spain exceeding about $1.3 billion were affected, within the broader context of boycott campaigns.[125]

6. Military Budget

Israel's military budget reached $48.93 billion (180.98 billion shekels) in 2024, based on actual expenditure. By contrast, on 25/3/2025, the Israeli Knesset approved the draft general budget for 2025, allocating $31.8 billion (109.8 billion shekels) to the Ministry of Defense.[126] It should be noted, however, that discrepancies may arise in official statistics, whether due to exchange rate variations or differences between approved budgets and actual spending.

As a result of the Israeli war on GS, the cost of the war has become a central issue in public debate both within Israel and beyond; notably, official figures reveal a significant gap in estimating the scale of expenditure and its financing mechanisms.

According to *Calcalist*, citing Ministry of Finance data published on 13/1/2026, total direct war expenditures since 7/10/2023 reached about $57.922 billion (200 billion shekels), including about $46.338 billion (160 billion shekels) in

defense spending. However, these figures exclude allocations to the compensation fund, which have amounted to about $7.819 billion (27.2 billion shekels). When these allocations are included, total war expenditures rise to about $65.683 billion (226.8 billion shekels). Importantly, these estimates do not account for indirect costs, such as lost tax revenues and the contraction in GDP.[127]

In another report, according to *The Marker*, official sources have presented divergent estimates of the cost of the war. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich cited about $89.4 billion (300 billion shekels), whereas the Bank of Israel estimated it at about $73.6 billion (247 billion shekels).[128]

This divergence is mainly attributable to differences in calculation methodologies; namely, some estimates are confined to direct expenditures up to the cessation of hostilities, while others also include projected costs related to compensation for damages, reconstruction and broader economic losses. Moreover, the variation reflects the institutional source of the estimates, whether the Ministry of Finance, the Bank of Israel, or independent international bodies. Overall, these discrepancies underscore the gap between official fiscal accounting frameworks and economic policies, while also highlighting the complexity of financing and managing the war at both fiscal and economic levels.

According to a SIPRI report, published in April 2025, Israeli military expenditure increased by 65% in 2024 to about $46.5 billion, driven by the war on GS. The report notes that this constitutes the largest annual rise since the War of 1967. Furthermore, military spending as a share of GDP rose from 5.4% in 2023 to 8.8% in 2024, giving Israel the second-highest military burden in the world behind Ukraine. Over the decade ending in 2024, military expenditure increased by 135%; consequently, Israel's global ranking in terms of defense spending rose from 14th in 2023 to 12th in 2024, surpassing both Poland and Italy.[129]

On 29/9/2025, the Knesset approved an additional allocation of about $9.2 billion (30.8 billion shekels) for defense spending, in response to security and civilian costs incurred from Israel's 12-day war with Iran in June 2025 and the ongoing war in Gaza.[130] Consequently, and taking into account earlier increases during 2025, the total announced defense budget rises to more than $41.1 billion (140 billion shekels).[131]

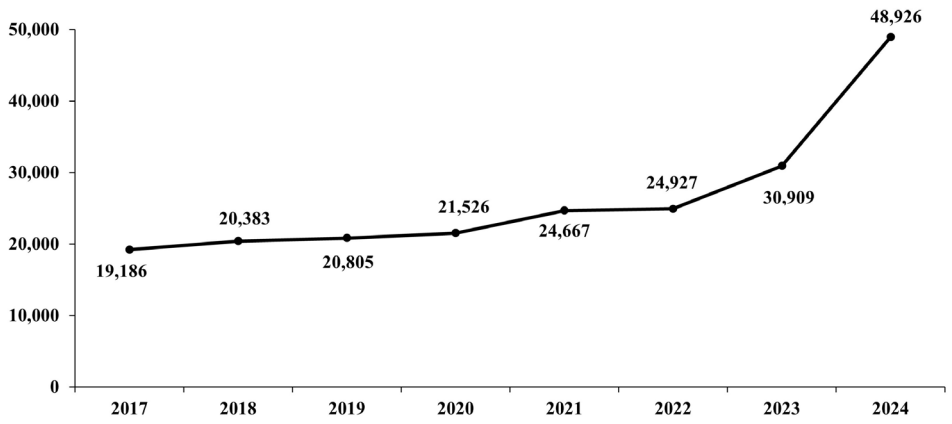
According to *The Marker*, the Israeli government has approved budget overruns five times since the outbreak of the war on GS, reflecting a clear prioritization of military expenditure over civilian and social sectors.[132]

The following table shows Israel's actual military expenditures according to the CBS for the 2017–2024:

Table 14/5: Actual Israeli Military Expenditures 2017–2024 at Current Prices[133]

Year	Expenditures (million shekels)	Expenditures ($ million)
2017	69,063	19,186
2018	73,316	20,383
2019	74,157	20,805
2020	73,978	21,526
2021	79,657	24,667
2022	83,699	24,927
2023	114,046	30,909
2024	180,977	48,926

Actual Israeli Military Expenditures 2017–2024 at Current Prices ($ million)



Fifth: The Israeli Approach to the Palestinian Situation in WB and GS

The Israeli war on GS, following Operation al-Aqsa Flood, during 2024 and 2025, provided an opportunity for Israel to implement plans that had already been formulated in advance regarding both GS and the WB. The Israeli political climate, shaped by a strong sense of vengeance, became increasingly permissive toward policies of killing, displacement, annexation, and the reconfiguration of realities in GS, while simultaneously intensifying efforts to consolidate control over the WB. In parallel, the silence and incapacity of Arab and Muslim countries expanded the margin of maneuver available to the occupation government.

In GS, Israel developed a post-war plan premised on establishing comprehensive field, political and security control, while excluding the PA from any substantive role. More specifically, the plan aimed at restructuring civil and economic governance through the establishment of Israel-controlled zones, the disarmament of resistance factions, and strict regulation of population movement and humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, it sought to cultivate local alternatives aligned with the Israeli vision.

During 2024 and 2025, senior Israeli officials issued a series of statements reflecting Tel Aviv's approach to the future of GS after the war, most notably a categorical rejection of the return of the PA to the territory. In this regard, Netanyahu stated on 9/8/2025 that "Gaza will be demilitarized, and a peaceful civilian administration will be established, one that is not the Palestinian Authority."[134] Furthermore, despite Tel Aviv's approval of Trump's plan to end the war, Defense Minister Israel Katz supported the establishment of Nahal nucleus groups to "protect settlements" across northern GS, stressing that Israel "will never leave the Gaza Strip."[135] In addition, Netanyahu noted that a "model city" would be constructed on the Israeli-controlled side of the yellow line, alongside disarmament and rehabilitation efforts, while emphasizing that "the only military forces that will enter Gaza in the International Stabilization Force would be those acceptable to Israel."[136]

The Israeli war machine, supported by US weaponry, managed to destroy most areas of GS and occupy extensive territories. However, it failed to break

Palestinian resilience or to induce population displacement, and it was unable to impose a political reality consistent with its objectives. In an attempt to identify alternatives, Netanyahu sought in June 2025 to mobilize certain Palestinian clans opposed to Hamas, in order to weaken the movement's control, as a measure that "saves soldiers' lives," according to security establishment recommendations.[137] Nevertheless, the initiative failed due to broad rejection by these clans. Subsequently, as a compensatory option, Tel Aviv explored the appointment of the General Intelligence Service (GIS) Chief Majid Faraj, as a temporary governor of GS after the war. This proposal was advanced by Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and was also endorsed by opposition leader Yair Lapid, who noted that it is natural to mention Faraj, as he is among the PA figures who has worked most closely with Israel against Hamas.[138]

Despite Israel's exclusion of the PA from any formal role in GS, security coordination continued in pursuit of wartime objectives. In this regard, the head of the National Security Council, Tzachi Hanegbi, met with Faraj with the approval of Benjamin Netanyahu in order to advance this approach. In parallel, Channel 14 reported that Faraj had begun forming an armed force in southern GS tasked with distributing humanitarian aid from the south to the north.[139] Moreover, Israel Hayom indicated that Tel Aviv received assistance from Fatah in facilitating humanitarian deliveries in coordination with Faraj. In response, the Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, described Israel's reliance on Fatah security personnel as a "disgrace," cautioning against the replacement of one form of "terrorism" with another. He further asserted that the time has come for full Israeli rule in Gaza.[140]

Following the failure of both the clan-based approach and the Majed Faraj channel, Israel moved into a new phase of administering GS by establishing mercenary groups and activating armed Palestinian militias operating in parallel with the army and under the supervision of the Shabak. In this regard, in an interview with public broadcaster Kan Reshet Bet, Avigdor Lieberman, leader of the Yisrael Beiteinu party, stated that the Israeli government was "transferring weapons to a group of thugs and criminals who identify with ISIS," adding that, in his view, the move was carried out with the knowledge of the head of the Shabak,

but without Cabinet approval.[141] Furthermore, Israel acknowledged the existence of at least three such groups tasked with gathering intelligence, monitoring areas devoid of Hamas and PIJ elements, and contributing to security control in densely populated areas hosting displaced civilians, as reported by *Haaretz*.[142]

Concurrently, Israel sought to impose a security and geographical reality that would maintain the blockade on GS while entrenching field control depriving Palestinians of more than half its area. During its occupation of extensive parts of the Strip, the Morag Corridor emerged, a security corridor between Rafah and Khan Yunis intended to separate them from the rest of GS. The Israeli army stated that "Approximately 30% of the Gaza Strip's territory is now designated as an Operational Security Perimeter."[143]

Subsequently, following the ceasefire agreement on 9/10/2025, and notwithstanding the adoption of the so-called "yellow line" as temporary withdrawal boundaries, more than half of GS remained under direct Israeli control or fire. Palestinians were prevented from accessing even residential and agricultural areas. In turn, Israel moved to consolidate and expand this reality so as to prevent the re-emergence of a political entity in Gaza, while the blockade and restrictions on humanitarian aid were employed as additional instruments of pressure in the conflict.[144]

The Israeli rejection of Palestinian reconciliation continued. In this context, Foreign Minister Israel Katz criticized the agreement reached by Palestinian factions in China on 22/7/2024 to form a temporary national unity government. He stated that "Hamas and Fatah signed an agreement in China for joint control of Gaza after the war. Instead of rejecting terrorism, Mahmoud Abbas embraces the murderers and rapists of Hamas, revealing his true face. In reality, this won't happen because Hamas's rule will be crushed, and Abbas will be watching Gaza from afar. Israel's security will remain solely in Israel's hands."[145]

Israeli policies aimed at consolidating control over the WB and advancing its eventual annexation intensified through tighter siege measures and repeated incursions into resistance strongholds that had confronted both army and settler attacks. Moreover, these operations were reinforced by the active role of PA security forces, reflecting the continued framework of "security coordination with Israel." In practice, PA forces carried out raids, arrests, killings and the transfer of

resistance members under the pretext of "combating outlaws," thereby functioning as a complementary extension of the Israeli security apparatus on the ground.

Israeli army data showed that security coordination with the PA reached "an unprecedented level" in 2025, alongside a sharp decline in attacks against Israeli targets. According to the figures, attacks dropped by 78% compared with 2024, a development the army's Central Command linked directly to intensified cooperation with the PA's security services. Israeli military officials described the coordination as "exceptionally high-level," portraying the PA's security apparatus as "an essential partner for stability." The data indicated that Palestinian security forces regularly return Israeli citizens who enter PA-controlled areas, seize and transfer weapons to Israeli authorities, and provide information related to planned attacks.[146]

This approach was further reinforced by the decision by the Israeli security cabinet on 18/12/2024 to support PA security operations in Jenin and other areas against members of Hamas and PIJ. At the same time, the military establishment underscored that "the PA's security forces should be bolstered so long as it doesn't represent a threat to IDF soldiers or to Israeli settlers." Moreover, discussions included the transfer of defensive equipment, such as protective gear and equipment used to neutralize explosive devices, with the assistance of "foreign entities that would be allowed to train the PA's forces."[147]

The Walla! news website reported, citing security officials, that coordination during 2024 was among the best in recent years. According to the report, Palestinian security forces thwarted about 164 attacks against the army, uncovered explosive devices and combat materials, detected drones, and returned Israelis who had inadvertently entered Palestinian areas under Palestinian security escort.[148]

Nevertheless, following the stabbing and shooting attack in the Gush Etzion settlement on 10/7/2025, carried out by two Palestinian police officers, Israeli concerns were raised regarding a possible Hamas infiltration of PA security forces. Palestinian security officials, however, swiftly condemned the incident and maintained contact with senior Israeli military officials, stressing that it was an exception that undermined security coordination and did not reflect the official position of the PA. In parallel, and in order to reinforce internal discipline, the PA

security forces appointed members of the Presidential Guard close to Mahmud ‘Abbas to sensitive positions within PA security institutions, including personnel trained in the US, according to Walla!.[149]

In further confirmation of the centrality of this cooperation, the commander of the Israeli Central Command, Avi Bluth, stated during an emergency meeting with settlement leaders in the WB in early January 2025 that coordination with PA security agencies provides Israel with security that is “more important than the threat of heavy weapons,” underscoring its role as a cornerstone of stability in the WB. Channel 14 also reported his emphasis on the pivotal place of the PA within Israel’s strategy in the WB.[150]

Notwithstanding the prevailing alignment between Israel and the PA in Ramallah, Israeli practices have simultaneously contributed to weakening the PA and eroding its institutional foundations. This has been evident in repeated incursions into areas under its control, the withholding of tax revenues due to it, and support for initiatives aimed at establishing separate Palestinian entities linked to the occupation.

In this context, Israeli Economy Minister Nir Barkat proposed a plan to detach Hebron from the PA and establish a separate emirate that “would recognize Israel as a Jewish state and join the Abraham Accords.” The proposal envisions replacing the PA leadership with local sheikhs and clans, while establishing direct civil, economic and security cooperation with Israel. It further includes the establishment of a joint industrial zone covering more than one thousand dunams (one thousand square meters per dunum) near the security barrier, expected to employ tens of thousands of Palestinian workers.[151]

Although the plan has received support from some Israeli officials, including Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, it has been opposed by the Shabak, which maintains that the PA remains a key partner in “counterterrorism efforts.”[152]

Moreover, Israel’s deduction of a substantial share of Palestinian tax revenues has resulted in the PA’s inability to fulfil its basic functions, including the payment of public sector salaries. These revenues constitute about 68% of the PA’s income; however, Tel Aviv has withheld more than 50% of them for over two years. This policy of withholding, in fact, dates back to 2019, with the total accumulated funds withheld reaching more than $2.5 billion as of 4/9/2025.[153]

On 4/9/2025, the Shabak warned that "the unraveling of the PA would raise the risk of a flare-up" in WB.[154] In parallel, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant called for permitting Palestinian workers to enter Israel and for the transfer of tax revenues, with the aim of strengthening the PA in its confrontation with Hamas, stressing that "A strong Palestinian Authority is in the best security interests of Israel."[155] Similarly, the commander of the Central Command, Yehuda Fox, in his farewell address on 8/7/2024, underscored that "The Central Command's ability to fulfill its tasks also depends on the existence of a functioning and strong Palestinian Authority."[156] By contrast, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reaffirmed a markedly different position, stating "It will not happen," he continued. "A Palestinian state will not be established west of the Jordan."[157]

Notably, the appointment of Hussein al-Sheikh as Secretary-General of the PLO Executive Committee, followed by his designation as its Deputy Chair and as interim successor in the event of presidential incapacity, was met with strong Israeli and US approval. This stands in contrast to his notably low popularity among Palestinians, including within Fatah. He has also faced sustained criticism over his administrative and personal conduct, as well as his ties with Israeli actors.

Conclusion

Israel is experiencing a pronounced state of strategic imbalance, which has become particularly evident since the formation of the Likud government in alliance with Religious Zionism at the end of 2022. This condition has been further consolidated since Operation al-Aqsa Flood and manifested most clearly during 2024–2025. It reflects a structural predicament, both internal and external, from which disengagement appears difficult, largely due to the nature of Israeli society and the dominance of right-wing and religious extremist currents over the governing system. Over several decades, Israel had managed to contain religious, ethnic and cultural differences within the Israeli community, while also constructing effective modern legislative, political and judicial institutional frameworks that enabled it to navigate numerous internal crises and contradictions. However, the period spanning 2024–2025 proved decisive in undermining this equilibrium.

In particular, the judicial overhaul crisis exposed the depth of political and societal divisions, as well as the fragility of the social contract within Israeli society, especially between secular and religious currents. It further revealed competing visions regarding the structure and trajectory of the state. Moreover, some manifestations of this crisis became evident in the controversy surrounding the conscription of ultra-Orthodox Jews (Haredim), culminating in the withdrawal of ministers from Shas and United Torah Judaism from the government in mid-July 2025.

Moreover, an unprecedented leadership crisis unfolded, characterized by escalating tensions and institutional contestation between the government, the military, the Shabak and the judicial authority, particularly during Operation al-Aqsa Flood. This was reflected in the dismissal or resignation of several senior figures, including Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi, National Security Council head Tzachi Hanegbi, Shabak Chief Ronen Bar, and the government's legal adviser Gali Baharav-Miara.

The failure of the traditional deterrence system upon which Israel has relied since its establishment, in confronting Operation al-Aqsa Flood, triggered notable shifts in Israeli security doctrine, particularly a transition from conventional deterrence to pre-emptive offensive deterrence. This reflects Israel's evolution into a permanently offensive state that manages its borders and strategic environment through sustained force, shifting from "deterrence by threat" to "deterrence by destruction." It further entails abandoning "buying calm" and "conflict management" within traditional containment frameworks, in favor of a broadened doctrine of "prevention," namely, denying adversaries the ability to initiate attacks. Nevertheless, the extensive reliance on force, widespread destruction and acts amounting to genocide undermined Israel's image as a restrained and rational actor, instead exposing a nature increasingly difficult to accommodate. In addition, the failure of deterrence mechanisms, coupled with the sustained resilience of the resistance throughout the confrontation, generated a structural "complex" that destabilized the Israeli political-security equilibrium, as its tools were exhausted without achieving the objective of eradicating the resistance. Accordingly, these dynamics contributed to a decline in both popular and official international support, the erosion of the Israeli narrative, and an unprecedented level of global isolation.

A structural contradiction has emerged between, on the one hand, the ideological drive toward settlement expansion and regional dominance, the erosion of sovereignty in several regional states such as Syria, Lebanon, and Iran, and the overt projection of Israel as a "regional policeman," a "heavy-handed force," and a power seeking to "reshape the Middle East". On the other hand, there is the strategic imperative for stability and the need to establish conducive conditions for political settlement and normalization processes.

The year 2025 was marked by a renewed and intensified push for constitutional change, steering the Israeli system further away from a constrained democracy toward an authoritarian-competitive order. In this context, the judiciary was increasingly delegitimized, subjected to intimidation, and politically undermined, while the legislature was weakened and the executive further consolidated power. The bureaucratic apparatus appeared either to acquiesce out of fear or to align itself with these developments. Concurrently, Netanyahu's trial and his request for a presidential pardon emerged as a central political and societal issue, shaping the trajectory of the political system, the future of elections in Israel, and the ruling right wing's sustained efforts to terminate the proceedings.

The year 2025 also marked the beginning of electoral political mobilization, particularly within opposition circles. Most polls indicated that the opposition would gain more seats than the current governing coalition, although it would still be unable to form a government without support from Arab lists.

At the same time, there has been notable Israeli opacity regarding the impact of Operation al-Aqsa Flood on Israel and its society. Available indicators suggest a reverse migration of approximately 550 thousand Jews during the first six months of the conflict, alongside increasing willingness among significant segments of the Jewish population to emigrate if given the opportunity. Although Israel maintains relatively advanced economic conditions compared to Europe and the Middle East, the escalation of Palestinian resistance has imposed substantial economic costs. These stem from heightened insecurity, reduced investment, heavy war expenditures, and repeated reserve mobilization. Collectively, these factors have led to widespread business closures, capital flight, disruptions in key sectors, particularly tourism, and adverse effects on both exports and imports.

In the same context, the Israeli army has become increasingly strained due to the prolonged war in GS and its expansion across multiple fronts. In 2024–2025, it faced a severe manpower shortage, alongside declining motivation among young people to join combat units. Simultaneously, the issue of conscripting Haredi Jews emerged prominently, becoming one of the most contentious domestic political questions in Israel.

Taken together, 2024 and 2025 reflected a deep internal Israeli crisis with significant external implications. The response has largely entailed a shift toward a more authoritarian political order, coupled with growing radicalization and greater reliance on force in addressing the Palestine issue and the regional environment. These developments are likely to further entrench long-term instability and risk.

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Chapter Six

The Palestine Issue and the Arab World

The Palestine Issue and the Arab World*

Introduction

The official Arab response to Israel's aggression in the GS following Operation al-Aqsa Flood on 7/10/2023, continuing through 2024–2025, was largely weak. Arab countries refrained from halting Israel's attacks, continued supplying it with essential resources, and actively helped shield it from aerial strikes.[1] While some Arab governments expressed rhetorical support for the Palestine issue, this rarely translated into concrete action.[2] Pro-resistance public in Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq supported Gaza in confronting Israeli aggression, while a broader regional war was avoided.[3] As for the Arab public response, it remained limited; the Arab street lacked the momentum seen in earlier confrontations with Israel, amid an official climate that curtailed engagement and lowered levels of mobilization, despite this war in GS being the deadliest and most comprehensive in the conflict's history.[4]

This chapter analyzes Arab positions on the Palestine issue, reviews the stances of the League of Arab States (LAS), and focuses on the frontline states: Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. It also considers the broader perspectives of other Arab countries, alongside public opinion across the Arab world.

First: LAS Positions and the Arab Summit

1. Position on the Peace Process for the Palestine Issue and the Resistance Project

Over the five LAS summits held during the two years covered by this report, ordinary sessions, including the 33rd Summit in Bahrain on 16/5/2024 and the 34th Summit in Baghdad on 17/5/2025, as well as the Joint Arab Islamic Extraordinary Summits with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Riyadh on 11/11/2024, Cairo on 4/3/2025 and Doha on 15/9/2025, the LAS consistently

* This chapter was written by Sameh Singer, except for the section on Egypt, authored by Fatima Hassan 'Itani, a researcher at Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations.

reaffirmed its call for a just and comprehensive peaceful resolution of the Palestine issue, encompassing the Palestinian people's legitimate aspiration for a contiguous state in GS and WB, along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.[5] Furthermore, the leaders of LAS and OIC called "on the Security Council to follow up on the international consensus expressed in the UNGA Resolution dated May 10, 2024 that the State of Palestine is qualified for full membership in the United Nations, calling to issue a resolution granting the State of Palestine full membership in the United Nations, and to urge Member States to mobilize the necessary support to adopt the resolution."[6]

Regarding Israeli aggression against GS following Operation al-Aqsa Flood on 7/10/2023, LAS, in summit statements issued during 2024–2025, condemned the ongoing Israeli aggression and genocide against the Palestinian people, including the imposition of starvation and a lethal siege, and the systematic destruction of infrastructure across GS.[7] Moreover, it denounced Israel's refusal to comply with UNSC Resolution 2728 (2024), which, inter alia, demanded "an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan," as well as UNSC Resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023), which demanded, inter alia, the immediate, safe, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid throughout GS. It further criticized Israel's failure to implement the ICJ provisional measures on 26/1/2024 and 28/3/2024, requiring Israel to halt the killing of Palestinian civilians and its facilitation of humanitarian and medical assistance across GS.[8]

The Arab League advanced a set of demands to halt Israeli violations against Palestinians, foremost ending Israeli aggression against GS. It called on the UNSC to adopt a Chapter VII resolution under the UN Charter compelling Israel to comply with a ceasefire, and to permit the entry of humanitarian aid.[9] In effect, LAS appeared to concede that only the UNSC could compel Israel to halt the war in GS, thereby shifting responsibility away from itself while overlooking the near-impossibility of securing such a resolution given the US veto. The LAS also "urged ICJ to expedite its ruling on the genocide lawsuit against Israel," and demanded breaking the Israeli blockade on GS, and enforcing the entry of humanitarian aid convoys.[10] Moreover, it called on states supplying arms to Israel to cease doing so, and urged countries whose citizens serve in the Israeli army and participate in crimes against the Palestinian people to pursue legal accountability and prevent further involvement.[11] LAS further called on Arab states to review

their diplomatic and economic relations with Israel;[12] however, none acted on this recommendation.

Following repeated calls by US President Donald Trump to relocate Palestinians from GS to Egypt and Jordan,[13] Arab parliamentary leaders adopted on 22/2/2025 an "Arab Parliamentary Document" supporting Palestinian steadfastness, rejecting displacement and annexation, and opposing efforts to eradicate the Palestine issue.[14] On 4/3/2025, the extraordinary Arab League Summit in Cairo endorsed Egypt's early recovery and reconstruction plan for GS as a unified Arab initiative,[15] focusing on rebuilding without displacing Palestinians.[16]

LAS welcomed the "peace" plan to end the war in GS, announced by US President Donald Trump on 29/9/2025, and signed at the Sharm El-Sheikh "Peace Summit" in October 2025, under Egyptian-US sponsorship with Qatari and Turkish participation. The UNSC endorsed it in Resolution 2803 (November 2025). The plan was seen "as starting point towards stopping bloodshed, ensuring unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid, withdrawal of the Israeli forces," and advance a two-state solution,[17] including provisions against Palestinian displacement and annexation of the WB. However, LAS expressed reservations, as noted by Assistant Secretary-General Hossam Zaki in a televised interview on 7/10/2025. His concerns centered on the scope and timeline of Israeli withdrawals and the involvement of certain international figures Zaki firmly rejected the notion of foreign actors, such as Tony Blair, managing affairs in GS, insisting that "Palestinians must govern themselves, not have rulers imported for them." He further underscored that "the vacuum left by the Israeli withdrawal requires empowering the Palestinian National Authority to assume its responsibilities."[18]

2. The Position on Normalization

The Arab League has consistently reaffirmed, in all its resolutions and statements, its full commitment to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, viewing it as the unified Arab position and the foundation for any efforts to revive peace in the Middle East. The initiative establishes that the precondition for peace with Israel and the normalization of relations is Israel's complete withdrawal from all Palestinian and Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, the Shebaa Farms, the Kfar Shuba Hills, and the occupied lands of the Lebanese town of Al-Mari. It also calls for the establishment of a fully sovereign Palestinian state along the 4/6/1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the restoration

of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination, the right of return, compensation for refugees, and a just resolution of their issue in line with UNGA Resolution 194 (1948).[19] Notably, the LAS's resolutions do not specify the measures that could be taken if an Arab state violates this consensus through normalization with Israel; for example, they do not address the possibility of suspending or revoking the membership of the state in question.

In this context, LAS Secretary-General Ahmad Abu al-Ghait, in a 29/5/2025 interview with *El País*, explained why Arab states with diplomatic ties to Israel had not severed them: "Severing relations is not a prudent policy when it comes to negotiating with the parties: Egypt and also Qatar [which does not officially recognize Israel] are trying to mediate to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza, which requires communicating with both sides, including Israel [the other being Hamas]. If there are no diplomatic relations or communication, it would be impossible to get anything from Israel."[20]

3. Internal Conflict and Reconciliation

In its resolutions and statements, LAS consistently reaffirmed support for President Mahmud 'Abbas's vision of national unity, grounded in commitment to the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, its political program and its international obligations. This vision is based on the principles of "one state, one law, and one legitimate security force," while affirming "that Gaza is an integral part of the State of Palestine, and that we are ready to assume full responsibility for governance and security there," within the political and geographic unity of the 1967 occupied Palestinian territories.[21]

Furthermore, LAS reaffirmed its support for Egypt's ongoing efforts "to achieve Palestinian unity at this critical stage, and enabling the Palestinian government to carry out its responsibilities and duties towards the Palestinian people, including through forming various mechanisms and agencies and agreeing on a community support committee to be formed by a decree issued by the President of the State of Palestine."[22]

Furthermore, LAS welcomed "the Palestinian decision to establish a Gaza Administration Committee under the umbrella of the Palestinian government —comprising qualified individuals from the Strip for a transitional period— alongside efforts to empower the Palestinian National Authority to return to Gaza as a manifestation of the political and geographical unity of the Palestinian

territories occupied in 1967." LAS also expressed "appreciation for the initiative put forth by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Arab Republic of Egypt to train and qualify Palestinian police forces to ensure their full preparedness in maintaining security throughout the GS.[23]

4. The Position on WB and Jerusalem

The Arab League called on "the international community to fully implement the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice dated July 19, 2024 towards ending the Israeli occupation, removing its effects, and paying compensation for its damages, as soon as possible." It also welcomed the UNGA resolution of 18/9/2024 adopting "the outcomes of the legal advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the illegality of the Israeli occupation," and urged the UNSC and the wider "international to take the necessary decisions, including imposing sanctions, in order to stop the escalating illegal Israeli measures in the occupied West Bank that undermine the two-state solution."[24] In this context, LAS condemned the Israeli Knesset's approval, on 22/10/2025, "of Israeli Knesset of two draft laws aiming to impose a so called 'Israeli sovereignty' over the occupied West Bank, and on Israeli illegal colonial settlements as a blatant violation of international law, and of United Nations Security Council resolutions…. in addition to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice."[25]

It also strongly condemned "the terrorist acts committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinian citizens and their property, which are escalating in an organized manner with the support and armament of the government and the protection of its forces." Furthermore, it called for "holding settlers accountable for the crimes they are committing against the Palestinian people and their property," "classifying Israeli settlers and Jewish settler movements as terrorist groups and organizations," and "boycotting products of Israeli settlements on the occupied Palestinian territory."[26]

LAS reaffirmed that East Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Palestine and condemned Israeli "attempts aimed at changing the legal and historical status quo in the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, dividing it temporally and spatially." It further denounced escalating Israeli measures in Jerusalem, such as civilian killings, home demolitions, forced displacement, and an unprecedented expansion of settlement projects. In response, LAS called for several measures, notably the adoption of a UNESCO decision affirming that *al-Aqsa* Mosque and al-Haram al-Sharif are

synonymous designations for a single site; confirming that "the entire 144,000 m2 area of the blessed Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram alSharif is a place of worship for Muslims only"; and reiterating that "the Department of Jerusalem Waqf and Blessed Aqsa Mosque Affairs of Jordan is the sole legitimate body that is competent to manage and maintain the blessed Aqsa Mosque and regulate entry thereinto," and that Israel has no authority to restrict Muslims from performing their religious duties there.[27]

LAS rejected any unilateral measures that would undermine Jerusalem's legal status, including the establishment of diplomatic offices or missions in the city; this encompassed the earlier US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the relocation of its embassy there, as well as decisions by Honduras, Kosovo and the Czech Republic to open diplomatic missions in the city. Moreover, it called on the international community to pressure Israel not to obstruct Palestinian general elections in East Jerusalem. It further urged Arab and Muslim countries, organizations, and funds along with civil society groups, to provide the necessary support and financing to safeguard the holy city and bolster the resilience of its residents and institutions against Israeli policies aimed at Judaizing the city and displacing its inhabitants.[28]

Second: The Positions and Roles of Some Key Countries

1. Egypt

a. Egypt's Relations with the Palestinian Parties

Throughout the war on GS and its aftermath, Egypt's engagement with the Palestinian parties was guided by a dual objective: upholding the official Palestinian legitimacy while maintaining functional channels of communication with key actors on the ground. This approach forms part of a broader Egyptian effort to reorganize the Palestinian political system in anticipation of the post-war phase. Accordingly, Cairo consistently affirmed that the PA is the sole legitimate authority entrusted with administering the Palestinian territories. It further tied any future arrangements in the GS to the PA's return to the Strip and the reunification of the WB and the GS under a unified political and security framework. Simultaneously, Egypt underscored the principle that arms must be monopolized by the official

Palestinian security institutions, rejecting any governing role for Hamas or other factions in the GS and calling for all armed groups to surrender their weapons to the legitimate authority.[29]

Egypt further reinforced its position as a principal sponsor of intra-Palestinian dialogue by hosting several rounds of talks in 2024–2025 between Fatah, Hamas, and the PLO. These discussions aimed to address the Palestinian schism ongoing since 2007 and to advance efforts at putting the Palestinian political house in order. In this regard, Cairo supported the establishment of transitional committees to oversee border crossings, relief, and public services, while also promoting the forming of a community support committee to mitigate the humanitarian crisis in the GS.[30]

Cairo convened several rounds of negotiations between Fatah and Hamas in late 2024. On 4/12/2024, the two movements reached agreement on a draft framework to establish a "Community Support Committee" to administer the GS in coordination with the PA government, based on an Egyptian proposal. However, Fatah withdrew its endorsement just four days later. The following month, a delegation from the PLO and Fatah formally communicated to Egypt their rejection of this framework, as well as any alternative arrangement that would involve Hamas in governance.[31]

Moreover, in October 2025, Cairo received senior Palestinian delegations, including one led by Vice President Hussein al-Sheikh, within the framework of political and security coordination for the forthcoming phase and the consolidation of Palestinian unity.[32] Subsequently, on 10/2/2026, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr ʻAbdelatty met in Cairo with PNC Speaker Rawhi Fattouh and PLO Secretary ʻAzzam al-Ahmad. ʻAbdelatty reaffirmed ongoing consultation concerning developments in the GS and WB, as well as Egypt's commitment to preventing renewed escalation and ensuring the uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian assistance, thereby underscoring its sustained and direct engagement with PLO institutions.[33]

Within the practical preparations for the "day after," Egypt announced the initiation of training programs for thousands of Palestinian police officers in Egyptian facilities, in coordination with Jordan, with a view to their eventual deployment in the GS to fill the existing security vacuum. This initiative underscores

Cairo's broader strategy of rebuilding the Strip's security infrastructure under the authority of the PA.[34]

In parallel, Cairo's position toward Hamas has reflected a calibrated pragmatic duality. On the one hand, official statements issued on 17/2/2024 advanced a critical assessment that situated the movement outside the bounds of "official Palestinian legitimacy." They further called for accountability for those actors that had enabled Hamas financially and politically in the GS, contending that such support had significantly deepened the Palestinian schism. At the same time, Egypt has continued to preserve channels of communication with Hamas, in recognition of its de facto authority in the GS and the practical necessities of mediation in de-escalation efforts and prisoner exchanges.[35]

b. Egypt's Approach to the GS War: Mediation and Post-War Arrangements

During 2024–2025, Egypt's efforts to end the war on the GS followed a multi-layered trajectory that combined diplomatic mediation, regional and international political engagement, and legal action before international bodies. Through this approach, Cairo sought to consolidate a ceasefire, prevent further regional escalation, and reintegrate the political track into the management of the conflict. Following the collapse of the initial truce agreement on 30/11/2023, Egypt, together with Qatar and the US, entered into an intensive negotiation process. This track comprised the first and second Paris meetings, held in January 2024 and February 2024, respectively, with the objective of formulating a framework for a prisoner exchange, ending the war, securing Israel's withdrawal from GS, enabling the return of displaced persons and initiating reconstruction. Nevertheless, the first meeting failed to produce a final agreement due to fundamental divergences between the parties. By contrast, the second meeting yielded preliminary consensus on a general framework for a prisoner exchange and introduced a phased de-escalation plan for the GS. Ultimately, the negotiations concluded on the basis of what became known as the "Paris Principles Document," without implementation of its initial phase within the proposed three-phase structure.[36]

Simultaneously, in February 2024, Cairo hosted indirect negotiations between Israeli and Hamas delegations, including a high-level meeting on 13/2/2024 with US, Israeli and Qatari officials to discuss de-escalation and a potential prisoner exchange. However, disputes over the terms of the exchange prevented any breakthrough.[37] Amid rising talk of a large-scale military operation in Rafah, in

February 2024 Cairo issued warnings regarding the consequences of such an incursion and hinted at the possible suspension of the "peace treaty" should Israel proceed.[38]

In March 2024, Cairo hosted an Arab meeting to discuss a humanitarian truce, with the PA participation.[39] It then joined a trilateral initiative with France and Jordan on 8/4/2024, calling for an immediate ceasefire and the release of all hostages.[40] On 12/5/2024, Egypt announced its official intervention in support of the case before the ICJ against Israel, reflecting an expansion of its role into the international legal domain.[41] In the same month, Egypt rejected CNN's allegations of document manipulation during negotiations, emphasizing that attempts to undermine its mediation would only worsen conditions in the GS and the wider region, and warning that it might reconsider its involvement if such challenges persisted. In the same month, Egypt rejected CNN's allegations of document manipulation during negotiations, emphasizing that attempts to undermine its mediation would only worsen conditions in the GS and the wider region, and warning that it might reconsider its involvement if such challenges persisted.[42]

Mediation efforts intensified in late 2024 and early 2025, culminating in a ceasefire agreement on 19/1/2025, brokered by Egypt and Qatar with US support. The accord provided for prisoner exchanges, Israeli withdrawal, humanitarian aid delivery, and the initiation of reconstruction.[43] However, Israel's refusal to advance to the second phase and its resumption of military operations on 18/3/2025[44] effectively reset the crisis, compelling Cairo to sustain its efforts to contain the escalation. On 18/3/2025, Egypt put forward a new ceasefire proposal for the GS following the collapse of the previous agreement. The initiative offered a mediated compromise, calling for a halt to hostilities, the reopening of the Rafah crossing for the evacuation of the wounded, and the delivery of humanitarian aid. In return, Palestinian resistance groups would release a number of wounded Israeli prisoners and the bodies of dual-nationality detainees, with final figures to be agreed once both parties accepted the proposal's humanitarian framework. The plan aimed to restore calm and lay the groundwork for renewed negotiations on resuming the ceasefire.[45]

In this context, security sources reported on 27/3/2025 that Cairo had received positive signals from Israel regarding its proposal, which Hamas had approved. An Egyptian security delegation subsequently traveled to Doha to

discuss implementation mechanisms amid efforts to establish a ceasefire before ‘Eid al-Fitr.[46] However, Israel did not act on the proposal, preventing its implementation and allowing military operations to continue.

Egypt sustained its diplomatic efforts in the following months, and in August 2025, it jointly announced with Qatar a new initiative outlining a pathway toward a comprehensive agreement to end the war. The plan included a temporary sixty-day halt to military operations, during which selected Palestinian prisoners would be exchanged for Israeli hostages in GS. While Hamas endorsed the initiative, Israel issued no official response,[47] leaving the proposal as part of ongoing efforts to stabilize the ceasefire and advance a broader peace settlement.

In this context, the Sharm El-Sheikh negotiations began on 6/10/2025 under Egyptian-Qatari-US sponsorship, aiming to establish broader agreements to end the war, based on a plan proposed by US President Donald Trump.[48] Officially announced on 9/10/2025, the plan called for an immediate ceasefire,[49] with Egypt receiving praise from Trump for advancing the negotiations.[50] On 13/10/2025, Cairo hosted the Sharm El-Sheikh Summit For Peace, co-chaired by Egyptian President ‘Abdul Fattah al-Sisi and US President Donald Trump, with wide international participation, seeking to consolidate the ceasefire and initiate the post-conflict reconstruction process.[51]

At the Arab level, Egypt convened the Extraordinary Arab Summit, designated the “Palestine Summit,” on 4/3/2025. The summit followed remarks by US President Donald Trump indicating an intention to assume control of the GS and relocate its population to neighboring states. Against this backdrop, the proceedings focused on categorically rejecting displacement proposals and formulating a coordinated framework for the reconstruction of the GS.[52]

Within the framework of “the day after” arrangements, Cairo set out a series of guiding principles. Chief among these were the indivisibility of the Palestinian territories and the rejection of any approach that isolates the GS from the WB, including East Jerusalem. Egypt also called for the PA’s return to the GS, the protection of the Palestinian population’s continued presence there, Israel’s withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories, and the realization of the Palestinian people’s legitimate rights, foremost the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state.[53] Concurrently, Egypt proposed a

non-factional transitional framework based on the establishment of a technocratic committee to administer the GS. This would be accompanied by the rehabilitation and redeployment of Palestinian police forces, as well as the training of thousands of new personnel in coordination with regional partners, with the aim of reconstructing the security architecture under the authority of the PA.[54] Cairo further underscored that governance of the GS must remain exclusively Palestinian, categorically rejecting any model of foreign administration.[55]

Furthermore, in February 2025, Cairo advanced a reconstruction framework aimed at ensuring that the population remains in the GS. The proposal provided for the establishment of temporary safe zones and the phased rehabilitation of infrastructure in partnership with international firms. In so doing, it constituted a clear response to, and rejection of, any initiatives premised on the displacement of Palestinians.[56]

Cairo further articulated this position through Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly at an international meeting held at the UN headquarters in New York on 24/9/2025. The meeting, convened at the invitation of French President Emmanuel Macron to discuss the "day after" and support stability in the GS, provided Egypt with an opportunity to reiterate that the viability of post-war arrangements hinges on addressing the structural causes of the conflict rather than treating the GS in isolation. Accordingly, Cairo emphasized that such arrangements must extend beyond narrowly defined security frameworks and be anchored in a clear political pathway with defined mechanisms for realizing a Palestinian state, while recognizing the GS as an integral and inseparable component of that state.[57]

At the security and political levels, Egypt emphasized the necessity of international guarantees for both the Palestinian and Israeli sides, insisting that any security arrangements be embedded within a clear political framework leading to the establishment of a Palestinian state. It expressed conditional openness to a potential international mission to support the transitional phase on the ground, provided its mandate is determined by the UNSC,[58] while cautioning against assigning such a force the task of disarming factions, which could provoke armed clashes.[59] Furthermore, Egypt rejected an Israeli proposal for it to administer the GS for a 15-year transitional period as part of the post-war "day after" plan, reportedly in exchange for debt cancellation.[60] Cairo also reaffirmed its commitment to

UNRWA, firmly opposing any replacement, and viewed attacks on the Agency as attempts to undermine international support for the Palestinian people.[61]

On the humanitarian front, in 2024 Egypt officially asserted that it bears no responsibility for hindering the delivery of aid to the GS, emphasizing that the Egyptian side of the crossing remained open. It highlighted that the main obstacles stemmed from the security situation, Israeli military operations, and Israel's control over the Palestinian side. This stance addressed repeated Israeli accusations attributing restrictions on aid to Egypt;[62] on 14/5/2024, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed that legal responsibility for the GS's humanitarian situation rests with Israel.[63]

Egypt also released detailed figures on the humanitarian convoys it had prepared or facilitated into the GS, aiming to counter allegations of complicity in the blockade.[64] Furthermore, in May 2024, it arranged temporary coordination with the Palestinian side to deliver aid through the Karm Abu Salem crossing, pending an agreement on Palestinian management of the Rafah crossing.[65]

Conversely, international investigative reports raised controversy over the commercialization of crossings by intermediaries and private companies, noting fees of $4,500–$10 thousand per person for those seeking to leave the GS. While some allegations suggested links between these networks and Egyptian security bodies, officials refrained from direct comment, leaving the issue confined to media debate without official resolution.[66]

In a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 7/5/2024, Egypt condemned Israel's military operations in the Palestinian city of Rafah and the subsequent Israeli control over the Palestinian side of the Rafah crossing. It described this escalation as a grave threat to the lives of more than one million Palestinians who depend primarily on the crossing. Furthermore, Egypt urged Israel to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid brinkmanship policies with far-reaching consequences, cautioning that such measures would jeopardize efforts to achieve a sustainable truce in GS.[67]

At the security level, Israeli media reports in June 2024 indicated that the Israeli army, in coordination with Egypt, was planning to establish a new Rafah crossing near the Israeli Karm Abu Salem crossing. The proposed "new Rafah crossing" was reportedly to be located at the tri-border point closest to Karm Abu Salem and operated under joint arrangements involving Israel, Egypt, the Palestinian

side, and the US, thereby facilitating enhanced inspection procedures to regulate cross-border movement. Israeli Channel 12 reported that the Israeli army planned to "coordinate with Egypt to build an above- and underground barrier along the Philadelphi Corridor."[68] However, Egyptian security sources denied these claims.[69]

Egypt secured its northeastern border through measures that included destroying over 1,500 tunnels between Sinai and the GS, reinforcing the boundary with a concrete wall nearly six meters high and equally deep below ground, and establishing a five-kilometer buffer zone.[70]

By contrast, the rejection of displacement has remained a central tenet of Egypt's policy. Through official statements and public statements, Cairo has consistently opposed any plan to transfer Palestinians outside the GS, viewing such measures as a direct threat to Egypt's national security and an attempt to undermine the Palestine issue.[71] In this context, the Egyptian Presidency affirmed on 5/9/2024 that any attempts to displace Palestinians are destined to fail, reiterating that the sole viable solution is the implementation of a two-state framework, with an independent Palestinian state within the 4/6/1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital.[72]

Moreover, on 26/1/2025, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed its categorical rejection of any infringement upon the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, cautioning against the destabilizing regional repercussions of displacement policies.[73] On 27/2/2025, Cairo hosted a human rights conference with participation from Arab and international organizations, alongside Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories. The participants stressed the urgent need to prevent the displacement of Palestinians, hold perpetrators accountable, and condemned Israel's policies promoting continued aggression, settlement expansion and forced displacement.[74]

Subsequently, on 21/3/2025, Egypt's State Information Service (SIS) dismissed allegations that residents of the GS had been relocated to North Sinai.[75] Later, on 16/7/2025, Cairo formally rejected Israeli proposals to establish a humanitarian tent city in Rafah near the Sinai border, as well as any demographic change in the GS.[76]

This stance continued into the second half of 2025. On 5/9/2025, Egypt underscored that it would not participate in any arrangements resulting in the

displacement of Palestinians.[77] It subsequently reaffirmed, in November 2025, its rejection of proposals to partition the GS or uproot its inhabitants.[78] More broadly, Cairo asserted that any attempt to displace the Palestinian people or eliminate the Palestine issue would constitute a crime of ethnic cleansing.[79]

This position aligned with Egypt's broader conception of the peace process, which places the two-state solution at its core as the only viable path to regional stability. In international forums, including the High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, held at the UN headquarters in New York in July 2025, Cairo reaffirmed its consistent support for the establishment of an independent and territorially unified Palestinian state encompassing the WB and the GS.[80] Moreover, at the final plenary meeting of the conference convened in New York on 22/9/2025, Egypt reiterated that the two-state solution represents a "security necessity," not merely a political option. It stressed that lasting stability in the Middle East remains contingent upon a just and comprehensive settlement that ensures the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the 4/6/1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.[81]

During the war on the GS, Egypt consistently condemned Israeli attacks and warned of their political repercussions. Cairo emphasized that continued Israeli military operations and the dismissal of de-escalation proposals reflected a lack of political will to reduce tensions, arguing that reliance on force would deepen hostility and undermine prospects for sustainable "peace."[82] In this context, Egypt condemned in September 2025 the expansion of military operations and accompanying violations of international humanitarian law, stressing that rejecting ceasefire proposals risked worsening the humanitarian crisis.[83] This stance was reiterated in January 2026, when Cairo denounced repeated Israeli violations of the ceasefire as a direct threat to efforts to consolidate calm and an impediment to the political process.[84]

c. Relations with Israel

During the war on the GS (2024–2025), Egyptian-Israeli relations demonstrated a dual approach, combining public political pressure with the maintenance of practical cooperation channels. This balance reflected both the obligations of the "peace agreement" and the sensitivities of the regional and domestic context. Egypt played a pivotal role in negotiations and mediation, placing itself at the

center of regional management of the issue, while sustaining a public discourse linking "genuine peace" in the Middle East to the establishment of a Palestinian state in line with international legitimacy. President 'Abdul Fattah al-Sisi described Egypt's experience with Israel as a historical model for "peacebuilding."[85]

Diplomatically, Egypt did not formally withdraw its ambassador from Israel during the war on the GS but effectively left the post vacant after recalling Ambassador Khaled Azmi in late summer 2024. It also declined to accredit a new Israeli ambassador following Amira Oron's term that ended in 2024, a move symbolically tied to the war on the GS and tensions over the Philadelphi Corridor and the Rafah crossing.[86]

Relations nonetheless experienced discernible strain, reflected in public exchanges of accusations and statements. This tension was particularly evident when, on 12/5/2024, Egypt announced its formal support for South Africa's case against Israel before the ICJ,[87] a diplomatic escalation signaling criticism of military operations in the GS, yet without resulting in a rupture of coordination mechanisms. Indeed, Western reports from Cairo in May 2024 indicated that security coordination persisted, especially with respect to border arrangements and Sinai. This reportedly included prior notification to Egypt of the incursion into Rafah and the advance of Israeli military to the Philadelphi Corridor and up to the Egyptian gate of the Rafah crossing on the Palestinian side, in full coordination with the US.[88]

During 2024–2025, Cairo hosted visits by senior Israeli security officials, including Herzi Halevi, Chief of the General Staff of the Israeli army, and Ronen Bar, chief of Shabak, to discuss developments related to Rafah and the Israeli hostages held in the GS.[89] In parallel, Egyptian military officials participated in regional meetings that brought together Arab and Israeli military leaders, including a gathering in Bahrain to explore prospects for regional security cooperation with the Israeli Chief of the General Staff.[90] However, in July 2024, Cairo formally denied the existence of any joint security arrangements with Israel regarding the border with the GS, accusing Israeli actors of promoting such claims to divert attention from operational setbacks in the Strip.[91]

The Washington Post reported on 11/10/2025 an expansion of security cooperation between several Arab states and Israel conducted away from public scrutiny. Citing US documents, including presentations prepared by United States

Central Command (CENTCOM) covering the period 2022–2025, the report outlined what the US military described as a "Regional Security Construct." This framework reportedly brings together several Arab states, including Egypt, alongside Israel, and documents secret meetings among senior officials, joint exercises, and various forms of intelligence cooperation.[92]

Economically, the normalization process between Egypt and Israel persisted through 2024–2025, particularly in the energy sector. Gas exports to Egypt and Jordan rose 25% in 2023, despite a partial suspension at the onset of Israel's military offensive in the GS,[93] and increased a further 13.4% in 2024, even amid ongoing hostilities.[94] According to Israel's Ministry of Energy in February 2024, the offshore Leviathan field, operated by Chevron in partnership with two Israeli companies, produced 6.29 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas for Egypt. The Tamar field exported 2.56 bcm, mostly to Egypt, despite an 11% production drop due to a month-long halt in operations at the start of Israel's war against Hamas.[95]

This trend was further reinforced in August 2025 with Israel's Leviathan natural gas field signing the largest export agreement in the country's history, worth up to $35 billion to supply gas to Egypt, providing approximately 130 bcm of gas through 2040, or until all of the contract quantities are fulfilled. Israeli Energy Minister Eli Cohen described it as "the largest gas deal in history," highlighting its political and economic significance. He noted, "It consolidates our position as a leading regional energy power upon which neighboring states rely and which they need," while also injecting billions of dollars into the state treasury, creating jobs, and strengthening the broader economy. The Israeli Broadcasting Authority reported that exports to Egypt under the deal will triple.[96]

However, this trajectory later faced strain. In September 2025, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly directed that the major gas agreement with Egypt should not proceed without his personal authorization, citing alleged Egyptian breaches of the peace treaty through military reinforcements in Sinai.[97] Nonetheless, on 16/9/2025, Chevron Corporation announced the launch of the Nitzana natural gas pipeline to transport gas from the Leviathan gasfield to Egypt. Once completed within three years, the pipeline is projected to transport around 600 million cubic feet (about 17 million cubic meters) of natural gas per day, increasing Israel's total export capacity to Egypt to more than 2.2 billion cubic feet (about 62 million cubic meters) per day.[98]

Trade between the two countries persisted throughout the war. According to the Israeli CBS, Israeli exports to Egypt increased from about $259 million in 2023 to $305 million in 2024, before falling to $203 million in 2025. In contrast, Israeli imports from Egypt grew steadily over the same period, rising from about $183 million in 2023 to $274 million in 2024 and reaching $358 million in 2025 (see table 1/6).

d. Popular Egyptian Response

The Egyptian public's reaction to the war on the GS (2023–2025) reflected a tension between broad societal solidarity with stringent state regulation of the public sphere. While the state adopted an official diplomatic discourse supportive of Gaza, it concurrently implemented a security-centered approach designed to preclude the expansion of domestic protest, while permitting only organized, officially sanctioned acts of solidarity. In late March 2025, following Eid al-Fitr prayers, demonstrations arose in Cairo and several governorates opposing the displacement of Palestinians. Sources from the Mostaqbal Watan Party, which holds the parliamentary majority, reported coordinated gatherings in front of multiple mosques. SIS, responsible for foreign media, claimed that millions of Egyptians participated in solidarity gatherings across roughly 6,240 designated Eid prayer sites nationwide in various governorates.[99]

At the same time, human rights documentation indicates that dozens of participants in solidarity demonstrations were arrested from October 2023 onward, on charges of participating in unlawful assemblies or joining "terrorist" groups, despite the peaceful nature of these protests. Reports by Human Rights Watch (HRW) record the arrest of at least 72 individuals between 20 and 24/10/2023, followed by additional detentions of activists, either from their homes or while attempting to take part in demonstrations.[100]

This approach continued throughout 2024 and 2025. Reports by Amnesty International and the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights documented the detention of more than 120 individuals in connection with solidarity-related activities, including peaceful protest, online expression, displaying banners calling for the opening of the Rafah crossing, and criticism of official policies. The reports also referred to the forcible dispersal of demonstrations, prolonged pretrial detention on charges such as spreading false news or unlawful assembly, and the referral of dozens of activists to trial.[101] Taken together, these measures

reflect a calibrated approach that distinguishes between external support for the Palestine issue and the tight regulation of domestic mobilization, thereby curbing the potential transformation of solidarity into sustained political pressure.

Amid the narrowing of space for public protest, economic boycotts emerged as the primary mode of popular expression. Sales at McDonald's franchises in Egypt fell by at least 70% in October and November 2023 compared to the same period a year earlier,[102] underscoring the growing impact of boycott campaigns. Furthermore, the Atlantic Council noted a marked rise in demand for local alternatives, particularly in the soft drinks sector, where "sales of Egypt's local soda alternatives have increased 500 percent since October 7, 2023."[103] Taken together, these trends suggest a deliberate effort by consumers to align their purchasing behavior with their political and ethical stances. The boycott thus evolved from a consumer choice into a politically and symbolically charged practice. In parallel, retailers displayed symbols supportive of Palestine, including the Palestinian flag, and actively promoted local substitutes,[104] thereby rendering the marketplace an indirect arena of expression within the public sphere.

The 2024/2025 Arab Opinion Index, published by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) and conducted between November 2024 and August 2025, shows that 77% of respondents in Egypt regard the Palestine issue as a collective Arab cause rather than solely a Palestinian one, whereas 17% view it as exclusively Palestinian. Furthermore, with respect to Egypt's potential recognition of Israel, 87% of respondents expressed opposition, compared to 12% in favor, while 1% either did not know or declined to answer.[105]

The high proportion of respondents who view the Palestine issue as a cause concerning all Arabs attests to the enduring salience of the pan-Arab dimension in shaping Egyptian public opinion, despite regional political shifts. Furthermore, the substantial opposition to recognizing Israel points to a marked divergence between popular sentiment and official policy orientations, highlighting the continued symbolic and affective weight of the issue in the construction of political identity. These patterns accord with findings from earlier rounds of the Arab Index, which indicate a relatively stable centrality of the Palestine issue within the hierarchy of Egyptian public opinion priorities.

Ultimately, Egyptian public sentiment has demonstrated a growing societal rejection of popular normalization, favoring daily or symbolic protests over

large-scale demonstrations. In this context, six opposition parties established the "Popular Front for Social Justice — Right of the People," emphasizing the need to confront violations of Egyptian sovereignty and threats to national security, primarily from Israel, while providing support to the Palestinian resistance.[106] This has reflected the continued salience of the Palestine issue in domestic political discourse within the constraints of the available political space.

2. Jordan

Jordan's approach to the Palestine issue in general, and to Israeli aggression against GS during 2024–2025 in particular, has been shaped by complex political, security and economic calculations, with its position defined by several key determinants, most notably:

- Jordan shares the longest border with historic Palestine, stretching about 335 km (97 km with the WB and 238 km with Israel). Furthermore, Jordanians maintain deep ties with Palestine due to history, geographic proximity, and intertwined families; millions are Palestinian refugees displaced by Israeli occupation aggression in 1948 and 1967, alongside those who arrived during the period of Jordan-WB unity (1950–1988). This is further underscored by the longstanding Hashemite custodianship over Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.[107]
- Several Jordanians carried out shootings targeting Israeli soldiers in September 2024,[108] October 2024,[109] and September 2025,[110] prompting Israel to continue building a separation wall between Jordan and Israel.[111] Jordan sees this as an attempt to block any future geographic connection with Palestine.[112]
- Jordan perceives the ruling Israeli right's strategy as one of territorial expansion coupled with transferring the Palestinian demographic burden to neighboring states, particularly Egypt and Jordan, through the displacement of GS residents to Egypt and WB residents to Jordan, reflecting the "alternative homeland" concept advanced by segments of the Israeli right.[113]
- At its core, Jordan's policy toward the Palestine issue is grounded in support for the peace process and the two-state solution, efforts to maintain calm in the WB, and the strengthening of the PA to prevent its collapse or erosion in favor of other actors.[114] Moreover, Jordan fears that a PA collapse could trigger internal Palestinian infighting, which Israel might exploit to reshape the landscape and pave the way for the forced displacement of Palestinians into Jordan.[115]

- This Jordanian outlook, supporting the peace process and the PA, implicitly rejects the approach of armed resistance factions such as Hamas. Accordingly, the Hamas and Jordan relationship "remains generally lukewarm, and may sometimes become tense due to what Jordan refers to as Hamas' military activities on its territory."[116]
- Jordan has been bound by a "peace" treaty with Israel since 1994 (the Wadi 'Araba Agreement), alongside strategic economic arrangements, including a gas import deal and a preliminary water-for-electricity exchange agreement.
- The Jordanian regime's close alignment with the US, and its substantial dependence on US support, particularly in light of Israel's centrality to US policy in the Arab region, therefore necessitates a distinct set of strategic calculations and considerations on the part of Jordan.
- Politically, Jordan aligns with the Arab "moderation axis," alongside Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, a bloc generally critical of Hamas and "Political Islam" movements.[117]
- Jordan's domestic equation reflects two conflicting dynamics. On the one hand, widespread public anger over Israeli massacres in GS, and support for Hamas's military operations against Israel, makes any official stance perceived as out of step with public sentiment vulnerable to backlash. On the other hand, strained relations between the Jordanian regime and Hamas are tied to Hamas's ideological and political links with Muslim Brothers (MB) Movement in Jordan, which has been in a "sustained crisis" with the executive authority and is increasingly viewed within ruling circles as a domestic rival amid fears of political exploitation.[118] This was evident in the September 2024 parliamentary elections, when the Islamic Action Front (IAF), affiliated with MB Movement, won 31 of 138 seats, the highest tally in its parliamentary history since the 1950s.[119]
- The war has hit Jordan's tourism sector, with Tourism Minister Makram al-Qaisi reporting a 50% drop in hotel bookings since the outbreak of the war in GS. This affects the economy and society, as nearly 600 thousand people work directly in tourism. At the macroeconomic level, prices of essential goods have risen due to disruptions in regional supply chains and trade, particularly via the Red Sea, which Jordan relies on for importing many basic commodities. Simultaneously, increased security and defense spending in response to regional tensions has

strained the national budget, limiting resources for development and public services.[120]

a. Development of Political Relations and Diplomatic Engagement

In response to these challenges, Jordan adopted a multifaceted approach to the security threats arising during the two years of Operation al-Aqsa Flood (2024–2025).

Politically, in his address to the UN on 24/9/2024, King ʻAbdullah II warned the international community that Jordan would under no circumstances accept being turned into "an alternative homeland."[121] Similarly, in September 2024, Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi declared that "any attempt to displace Palestinians from the West Bank towards Jordan will be viewed by us as a declaration of war and we will work with it accordingly."[122]

After US President Donald Trump announced on 4/2/2025, plans to control GS and relocate its residents to neighboring countries, especially Egypt and Jordan, King ʻAbdullah II, following his meeting with Trump in Washington on 11/2/2025 signaled his indirect rejection, citing Jordan's national interest. He stressed that "Egypt and Arab countries will present a plan on Gaza," and reiterated that "rebuilding Gaza without displacing the Palestinians and addressing the dire humanitarian situation should be the priority for all."[123] On 17/2/2025, he reaffirmed, "For 25 years, I have been saying no to displacement, no to resettlement, no to the alternative homeland."[124]

Meanwhile, the Jordanian regime did not heed growing calls, from both the elite and the public, to strengthen ties with Hamas and other Palestinian resistance factions.[125] Instead, 2024–2025 witnessed a period of stagnation, and at times tension, in bilateral relations, driven by two key issues:

The first issue involved Hamas' April 2025 call for Jordanian authorities to release individuals arrested for allegedly participating in plots to sow disorder, while insisting they had not threatened the kingdom's security or stability. That same month, Jordanian authorities reported the arrest of 16 people accused of planning unrest within the country, including possession of explosives and firearms, a scheme to manufacture drones, and the recruitment and training of operatives both domestically and abroad.[126]

The second issue involved criticism by Khalil al-Hayya, head of Hamas in GS, who, in his 27/7/2025 speech, denounced the "farcical" airlift operations delivering aid to GS. He called for the opening of crossings and the provision of aid in a dignified manner, and urged popular mobilization in neighboring countries to support Palestine and pressure embassies. Al-Hayya specifically addressed the Jordanian people, encouraging them to sustain their popular uprising, intensify efforts to halt the heinous crimes, and prevent the Zionist right from advancing its plan regarding the notion of an "alternative homeland" and the division of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.[127] His speech sparked official Jordanian anger, and on 28/7/2025, the state-owned channel "AlMamlaka TV" aired a report condemning his remarks, criticizing his appeal to the Jordanian public and describing it as "inciting chaos" in Jordan and across the Arab world.[128]

Regarding Jordan's role in the aftermath of the Gaza war, King 'Abdullah II reaffirmed his refusal to deploy Jordanian forces to GS if the mission of any "international forces" were "peace enforcing" rather than "peacekeeping." He stressed, "Peacekeeping is that you're sitting there supporting the local police force, the Palestinians, which Jordan and Egypt are willing to train in large numbers… If we're running around Gaza on patrol with weapons, that's not a situation that any country would like to get involved in."[129] In a joint statement with the foreign ministers of seven Arab and Muslim countries, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Türkiye, Indonesia, and Pakistan, Jordan welcomed the invitation extended by US President Donald Trump to join the Board of Peace (BoP). The statement underscored the signatories' "commitment to supporting the implementation of the mission of the BoP as a transitional administration…. aimed at consolidating a permanent ceasefire, supporting the reconstruction of Gaza, and advancing a just and lasting peace grounded in the Palestinian right to self-determination and statehood in accordance with international law."[130]

Domestically in Jordan, and unlike many Arab states, the authorities sought to accommodate popular reactions expressing solidarity with GS in the face of genocidal crimes, allowing relatively broad space for public anger and support for the Palestinian people. This facilitated sustained street mobilization across much of the country since 7/10/2023. Nevertheless, a strict policy barred demonstrations from reaching the Israeli embassy in Amman or approaching border areas with Palestinian territories under Israeli occupation, a strategy that largely contained

public anger and avoided security repercussions. However, dissatisfaction with the ceiling of the official stance persisted, as popular demands continued for the full severance of relations with Israel, beyond recalling the Jordanian ambassador and freezing the embassy's work in Amman. Calls also persisted to block trucks bound for Israel from transiting Jordanian territory[131] and to deliver aid to GS by force.[132]

Accordingly, Jordan's security response to demonstrations supporting GS became more forceful. Authorities launched arrest campaigns against activists and protesters involved in pro-Gaza mobilization, and some demonstrators were reportedly beaten by security forces. In the same context, Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan dismissed several students and referred others to disciplinary committees for participating in a solidarity event with GS.[133] Moreover, on 23/4/2025, Jordanian authorities banned all activities of the MB Movement, designating it an illegal organization.[134] The decision was officially justified by the arrest of 16 individuals (linked to the MB Movement) accused of illicitly manufacturing rockets and drones and recruiting and training members to "provoke chaos and sabotage within the Kingdom."[135] The movement denied any involvement, arguing that the measure was driven by its active role in pro-Gaza demonstrations. Consequently, pressure on Jordan's pro-Gaza popular mobilization is likely to intensify, particularly in light of Trump's measures to designate several branches of the MB Movement (in Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon) as "terrorist" organizations.[136]

In response to border-related challenges, Jordan has reinforced its security posture by deploying additional military forces along its borders with Israel, Syria and Iraq to counter potential cross-border threats and prevent infiltration through Jordanian territory toward Israel.[137] Furthermore, Crown Prince Al-Hussein bin 'Abdullah II announced the reactivation of the "National Military Service Program (mandatory conscription)" for the first time since its abolition in 1992, with implementation scheduled to begin in 2026.[138]

Regarding the use of Jordanian airspace as a theatre for reciprocal military strikes between Israel and Iran, the Jordanian Public Security Directorate stated in a communiqué issued on 1/10/2024 that Royal Air Force aircraft and air defense systems had intercepted numerous missiles and drones that entered the Kingdom's airspace.[139] Subsequently, on 13/6/2025, the General Command of the Jordan Armed Forces announced the interceptions of "several missiles and drones" following military assessments "indicating that the missiles and drones were

likely to fall within Jordanian territory, including populated areas, posing a potential threat to civilian safety."[140] Furthermore, the Minister of Government Communication and the Jordanian Government Spokesperson, Mohammad Momani, affirmed that the Kingdom "has not and will not allow any violation of its airspace, reaffirming that the Kingdom will not be a battleground for any conflict."[141]

On the humanitarian front, Jordan, for instance, has provided substantial assistance to GS through the Jordan Hashemite Charitable Organization (JHCO) in the period following the October 2023 war and up to 4/8/2025, amounting to $335 million. This assistance has encompassed the delivery of 111,406 tons of aid, the provision of 6 thousand units of blood, and the fitting of 532 prosthetic limbs under the "Restoring Hope" initiative.[142]

b. Relations with Israel

Under US pressure, Israel agreed to extend its October 2021 water supply agreement with Jordan, originally signed with the Bennett-Lapid government and set to expire in May 2024, for only six months,[143] despite Jordan's request for a five-year renewal, amid heightened bilateral tensions linked to the war on the GS.[144]

In 2024, Israel's natural gas exports to Egypt and Jordan increased by about 13.4%.[145] During the war, Jordan and Türkiye were the main exporters of fruits and vegetables to Israel,[146] helping offset shortages in Israel's agricultural sector. A land supply route from the UAE to Israel via Saudi and Jordanian territory also operated after the Houthis blocked Israeli ships at the Bab al-Mandab Strait. The Jordanian government noted that the exports reflected private-sector decisions rather than government policy[147] and reaffirmed its commitment to free transit agreements.[148]

3. Syria

a. Development of Political Relations and Diplomatic Engagement

Socially

Regardless of the policy pursued by the new Syrian leadership under President Ahmad al-Sharaa toward Palestinians, the broader challenges facing Syria are expected to impact Palestinian refugees in the short and medium term.[149] These key challenges can be summarized in four main points:

1. **Reconstruction of Palestinian Refugee Camps (RCs):** Palestinians in Syria aim to rebuild destroyed RCs, particularly Yarmouk, Ein el Tal (Handarat) and Dara'a, to enable the return of displaced residents and restore normal life.[150] The lifting of economic sanctions on the Assad regime is expected to accelerate reconstruction and boost the country's economy, benefiting both Syrians and Palestinians.[151]
2. **The issue of detainees and the forcibly disappeared**: Palestinians in Syria continue to call for the release of those still held in the security branches and prisons of the former regime.
3. **The return of refugees** has seen promising progress under Syria's new administration. Security barriers in Yarmouk RC were removed, allowing free movement for Palestinians. Furthermore, Syrian Palestinians can now cross from Lebanon into Syria using only their personal Syrian IDs (the temporary residency documents previously issued to Palestinian refugees by the former authorities), without passports.[152]
4. **Civil and Political Rights:** Palestinians hope to recover properties confiscated by the former Assad regime and its allies, especially those of individuals displaced to northern Syria who supported the Syrian opposition. This process has already begun in some RCs, with rights being restored to their rightful owners.[153]

In a significant move to rectify the legal status of thousands of Palestinian refugees in Syria lacking official documentation, the General Administration for Palestine Arab Refugees (GAPAR), under the Syrian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, issued a circular in October 2025 addressing a gap in the application of Law No. 260 of 1956. While this law had granted Palestinian refugees civil rights on par with Syrian citizens, excluding nationality and the right to run for office and vote, it had previously applied only to those who entered Syria between 1948 and 1956, leaving tens of thousands who arrived in later waves, after the June 1967 *Naksah* and the September 1970 events, excluded. The circular allows all affected refugees to register with GAPAR, thereby extending the protections of Law No. 260 and restoring fundamental rights such as education, employment and healthcare, which they had been denied for decades. Despite broad Palestinian approval, calls remain to revise Law No. 260, as it still limits certain rights, including restricting ownership to a single property.[154]

Palestinian hopes for a role in shaping Syria's future are rising, with some positive signs emerging. Notably, Ahmad al-Sharaa, leader of Syria's new administration, appointed Ghiath Diab, a Palestinian refugee, as Minister of Oil in the interim government, the first time a Palestinian has held such a post.[155] Moreover, Palestinian refugees can now apply to join the General Security Directorate following the end of mandatory service.[156]

Although these appointments signaled a positive shift, they mainly involved figures linked to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) or technocrats chosen for their expertise.[157] Expectations for Palestinian refugee representation in the Syrian national dialogue, which would have reinforced their sense of inclusion in Syria's future; however, no Palestinian refugees took part in these sessions.[158]

Politically

The new Syrian administration under President Ahmad al-Sharaa has tightened control over Palestinian factions that fought alongside the Assad regime during the uprising, demanding they surrender weapons and vacate their bases, prompting most leaders to leave Syria.[159] The authorities have also targeted faction members with ties to Iran.[160] Although al-Sharaa returned bases to Hamas and lifted the ban on its property, confiscated by the previous regime after Hamas refused to join internal fighting,[161] Palestinian concerns remain over the shrinking of political activity in Syria, potentially reducing it to humanitarian work.[162] These concerns intensified after the US urged the Syrian transitional government to "take necessary steps to ban and deport Palestinian terror groups" as part of the conditions for sanctions relief.[163] Syrian authorities have affirmed their commitment "that Syria will not pose a threat to any country in the region or the world, including Israel."[164]

In contrast to its tightening restrictions on Palestinian factions in Syria, the new Syrian administration has opened channels with the PA, hosting an official delegation on 28/1/2025.[165] The future course of PA-al-Sharaa relations is likely to depend on two key factors. First, the new Syrian leadership's position toward the broader Palestinian political landscape, particularly regarding the legitimacy of Palestinian representation; the PA's visit appears aimed at pre-empting rival movements seeking greater influence within Palestinian refugee camps in Syria. Second, this factor relates to regional and Arab positions regarding the ongoing changes in Syria, as the PA recognizes the need to act in accordance with the orientations of key regional actors.[166]

b. Relations with Israel

On the Military Level

Palestinian factions cooperating with Lebanese Hizbullah fired mortar shells from southern Syria toward the occupied Golan Heights three days after the launch of Operation al-Aqsa Flood (10/10/2023). Similar attacks by other Iran-aligned forces followed on 15 and 25/10/2023. However, military activity from the Syrian front was brief; calm soon prevailed along the Golan front and persisted throughout the intensive war on GS. This prolonged quiet was widely interpreted as a sign that Syria had withdrawn from active confrontation with Israel.[167]

Although "Israeli military operations in Syria and Lebanon were not explicitly aimed at toppling Assad's regime, Tel Aviv did not conceal its satisfaction with the outcome, considering the regime's fall to be the end of Iran's presence in Syria and a major blow" to Hizbullah in Lebanon. However, alongside "the initial satisfaction with Assad's fall, Israel has also expressed hostility toward Syria's new government. Arguably, Israel is the only country to adopt an explicit and direct hostile stance toward the new government in Damascus."[168] Israeli statements highlighted that the rise of jihadist Islamic forces as Assad's replacement threatened Israel's borders with Syria, stating that "Israel will not permit jihadi groups to fill that vacuum and threaten Israeli communities on the Golan Heights with October 7th-style attacks."[169]

Following Assad's fall, Israel adopted a two-pronged military strategy. The first involved airstrikes, Operation Bashan Arrow (*Hetz HaBashan*), carrying out "a thousand airstrikes, destroying many Syrian military and civilian institutions," including bombing "the presidential palace twice,"[170] destroying roughly 80% of Syria's army weapons.[171] The second involved ground incursions, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declaring that the 1974 Disengagement Agreement "has collapsed" and ordering "to seize control of the buffer zone between Israel and Syria, located in Syrian territory."[172] Within six months, the Israeli army fully seized the 252 km² buffer zone, including Mount Hermon just 38 km from Damascus, establishing 12 military posts, 10 in the buffer zone and two near the Bravo line. Among these positions is Hermon's summit, the highest peak overlooking Damascus.[173]

As of this writing, Israel controls over 500 km² across Dara'a and Quneitra, bordering the occupied Golan Heights, and parts of Suwayda,[174] following its

advance beyond the disengagement zone. Israeli media report that its tanks have reached within 12 km of Damascus.[175] Israel continues ground incursions into Syrian territory, with "more than 400 ground incursions."[176]

Initially, Israeli statements from the Prime Minister's Office[177] and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs[178] and Defense[179] stressed that Israel's military presence in Syria was "limited" and "temporary," meant only until a force complying with the 1974 Israel-Syria Disengagement Agreement could ensure security. Over time, however, official statements indicated that this presence would be indefinite. They asserted that the southern region, including Quneitra, Dara'a, and Suwayda, would be fully demilitarized, with Israeli forces remaining atop Mount Hermon (the recently occupied area). Any attempt by the new Syrian army to strengthen its capabilities in the south would be met with force, under the pretext of preventing "southern Syria to become southern Lebanon."[180] and protecting the Golan and Galilee from threats emanating from Syria, a principle drawn from the lessons of 7 October 2023.[181]

The Syrian response to this Israeli escalation was as follows:

1. On 9/12/2024, the Syrian Interim Government sent two identical letters to the UNSC and the UN Secretary-General, urging the UNSC "to take action to compel Israel to immediately stop its attacks on Syrian territory and withdraw from areas it has penetrated in the north in violation of a 1974 Disengagement Agreement."[182]
2. Since taking power, the new Syrian administration has sent reassuring messages to the international community and neighboring states, especially Israel, affirming it does not intend to continue hostilities. This marks a significant shift from Bashar al-Assad's era, which was defined by antagonism toward Israel and Syria's role as a frontline state in the so-called "Axis of Resistance."[183]
3. The new Syrian authorities took steps to prevent any potential escalation with Israel, including withdrawing heavy weapons in line with the force separation agreement or 1974 Disengagement Agreement, after the al-Assad regime had redeployed them along the border within the Bravo line under the pretext of combating armed opposition. They also withdrew heavy weapons from the interior and reinstated police checkpoints up to 10 km from the ceasefire line. These posts were responsible for inspecting and confiscating unregulated arms

from local residents, preventing military activity in the area, and carrying out security operations against leaders of armed groups connected to the former regime, Iran and Hizbullah.

4. The new Syrian administration turned to Arab and Western states, especially the US, whose ties with the al-Sharaa government had significantly improved, to pressure Israel and mediate a halt to its violations within Syria.
5. Regarding its relationship with Türkiye, whose presence in Syria Israel perceives as a threat on par with Iran, allegedly due to a strategic alignment with the new Syrian leadership, al-Sharaa seems to be steering the matter toward direct negotiations between Israel and Türkiye.[184] In this context, talks held in Azerbaijan resulted in an agreement to establish "a hotline to prevent possible military flare-ups and misunderstandings in Syria."[185]
6. In November 2025, talks were held between the Syrian and Russian sides regarding the redeployment of Russian military police patrols in southern Syria to act as a buffer between Israeli and Syrian forces.[186]

On the Political Level

1. Alliance with minorities

Israel's primary objective in Syria appears to center on fragmentation and decentralization through a federal or confederal structure composed of relatively balanced entities: Kurds in the northeast under US patronage; Sunnis in the northwest and central regions under the auspices of Türkiye and Sunni Arab states; 'Alawites along the coastal region (Latakia) under Russian patronage; Christians in Wadi al-Nasara under US protection; and Druze in the south (Suwayda) under Israeli patronage.[187] In February 2025, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar stated, "Syria can only be stable if there is a federation that includes various autonomies and respects diverse lifestyles."[188]

In pursuit of this objective, "certain circles in Israel have advocated for an alliance with the Kurds in Syria, specifically the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), with the aim of supporting Kurdish separatism and preventing the new regime from asserting control over Kurdish-majority areas."[189] Moreover, Israel may have been among the most supportive actors behind SDF commander Mazloum 'Abdi's call to establish an autonomous region in Syria modeled on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.[190]

Alongside its support for Kurdish actors, Israel regards the Druze community in Syria as a relatively accessible entry point for intervention in Syrian internal affairs for several reasons. First, Druze-populated areas are located near territories Israel occupied in southern Syria following the regime's collapse. Second, Israel claims a degree of "legitimacy" through "the head of the Druze community in Israel, Muwafaq Tarif. Israel claims its relationship with the Druze is historic and that it has a commitment to the Druze as a religious minority."[191] Third, Israel, particularly its current coalition government, seeks to deepen Druze loyalty, especially among those serving in the Israeli military, security services and state institutions. Fourth, Israel aims to enhance its political and media image by promoting narratives that depict the Syrian regime as persecuting minorities while presenting itself as a defender of their rights and security. Consequently, segments of the Syrian Druze community may gain political weight exceeding their demographic size, partly due to perceived Israeli backing and alignment with movements resisting Damascus's authority.[192] Nevertheless, a strong nationalist Druze movement rejects engagement with Israel, cooperates constructively with the government in Damascus, and opposes separatist claims.

Israel exploited tensions in Jaramana, south of Damascus, on 1–2/3/2025 between Damascus government security forces and Druze gunmen.[193] In early March 2025, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz stated that they had ordered the army to intervene to protect the Druze in Jaramana should Syrian government forces target them.[194] Similarly, the events in Suwayda between 13–17/7/2025 enabled Israel to deploy the Druze card against the Syrian state and tribal forces that had clashed with Druze groups, while implementing its prior warnings to Damascus.[195] Israel conducted airstrikes targeting the Syrian Ministry of Defense and General Staff headquarters in central Damascus, areas near the presidential palace,[196] and convoys of Syrian forces and tribal fighters.[197]

Concurrently, Israel provided food and medical humanitarian assistance to the Druze of Suwayda[198] and received wounded individuals through Druze communities in the occupied Golan Heights and nearby areas. Additional measures included allowing residents of Druze villages east of the Golan to work in Israel[199] and organizing a visit for dozens of Druze clerics from the Syrian village of Hader to the shrine of Nabi Shu'ayb in the Galilee, where they met Druze religious

leaders in Israel.[200] Reuters, citing Two senior Syrian Druze figures and a Western intelligence source reported that "Israel was also paying salaries for many of the roughly 3,000 Druze militia fighters."[201]

Israeli officials have repeatedly emphasized[202] the need to protect Israel's interests in Syria, whether through negotiations or military action, focusing mainly on demilitarizing southwestern Syria and safeguarding the Druze community.

This support reportedly led Hikmat al-Hijri, a Druze spiritual leader, to call for a separate "Druze region" independent of the Syrian state.[203] Hundreds also demonstrated in central Suwayda under the slogan "the right to self-determination," waving Druze and some Israeli flags.[204]

2. Normalization of Relations

The renewed discussion surrounding the possibility of an agreement between Israel and Syria raises several questions about what would each side stand to gain from such an agreement. From Israel's perspective, an agreement with Syria could offer significant strategic advantages: establishment of a calm, secure front on the northern border; forming of a joint struggle against the "Axis of Resistance" (Hizbullah, Iran and Palestinian factions); and an opportunity to rehabilitate Israel's regional and international standing, especially after a prolonged erosion of its legitimacy following the fighting in the Gaza Strip. From the Syrian perspective, an agreement with Israel could lead to an Israeli withdrawal from areas in southern Syria and a halt to Israeli airstrikes. These measures would allow the regime to focus resources on stabilizing the country and, most importantly, restore Syrian sovereignty over its territory. The agreement may also include provisions of particular significance: intelligence-security coordination between Israel and Syria as part of their joint fight against Hizbullah and Iran's presence in Syria, and later, economic cooperation such as Israeli gas exports to the Syrian market and joint water management in the Yarmouk Basin in coordination with Jordan.[205]

Building on these anticipated gains, talks were launched between Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer and Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani, under the auspices of President Trump's special envoy Tom Barrack, with the aim of reaching "security understandings regarding southern Syria."[206] According to media reports, the discussions included the following:

- Prohibiting all direct or indirect activity by Hamas and PIJ from Syrian territory, including political offices, logistical support, and the future presence of senior leaders.
- Ending regular meetings between Israeli military intelligence and the SDF in northeastern Syria, given their role in reinforcing separatist tendencies and undermining state unity.
- Implementing a phased Israeli withdrawal from all of the territories it has occupied in Syria since early 2025, "except for an outpost on the summit of the strategic Mount Hermon."
- Maintaining an aerial corridor to Iran via Syria in coordination with the US, thereby facilitating potential future strikes against Iran or Hizbullah.[207]
- Preventing Türkiye from rebuilding the Syrian army or consolidating control over Syrian airspace in ways that could constrain Israel's operational freedom.
- Establishing a humanitarian corridor between Israel and the city of Suwayda.[208]
- Establishing "a new demilitarized zone, modeled on the demilitarized zone in Egypt's Sinai. It calls for expanding the Syrian buffer zone by adding a two-kilometer area east of the Bravo Line, where any military or security forces are prohibited, subject to the authority of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)." "The expanded buffer zone would be followed by a fully demilitarized zone where no Ministry of Defense personnel are allowed, though police and internal security forces could operate. The leaks did not specify the exact dimensions of this zone, although it is believed that the Israelis will demand a configuration similar to what was stipulated in the 2018 South Syria Agreement—extending 80 kilometers east of the new Bravo Line and encompassing the entire Dara'a and Suwayda governorates." Furthermore, "Israel seeks to ban Syrian warplanes from entering areas south of Damascus up to the border with the occupied Golan Heights, effectively establishing a no-fly zone."[209]
- According to Reuters, the US is reportedly planning to establish a military presence at an airbase in Damascus, strategically near southern Syria, which is expected to become a demilitarized zone under the anticipated security agreement between Israel and Syria, to monitor its implementation.[210] The Syrian Foreign Ministry, however, denied these claims.[211]

The new security agreement between Syria and Israel, expected to be announced during President Ahmad al-Sharaa's September 2025 UNGA visit to New York, was not disclosed. Reuters reported that the delay stemmed from Tel Aviv's insistence on a corridor linking Israel to Syria's Suwayda Governorate, though this alone does not fully explain the impasse despite US pressure to finalize the deal.[212]

A review of recurring Syrian and Israeli statements suggests a series of obstacles that limit Syria's openness and normalization with Israel, preventing substantial progress in their relationship. The key among these are:

- The future of the occupied Golan Heights remains contentious. Israel insists that "in any peace agreement - the Golan will remain part of the State of Israel,"[213] a stance reinforced after Trump recognized its annexation during his first term. Conversely, the Syrian government under al-Sharaa cannot cede the territory, particularly in light of the symbolic significance of al-Sharaa's own name, "Abu Muhammad al-Julani,"[214] and in light of the UNGA's 2/12/2025 resolution calling for an end to Israel's occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights.[215]
- While the al-Sharaa administration seeks agreements with Israel to prevent operations or strikes on Syrian territory, Israel insists on maintaining the ability to respond to security threats, especially if it withdraws from the buffer zones as requested by Damascus.[216]
- The Syrian side calls for Israel's withdrawal from the areas it occupied after December 2024, restoring conditions under the 1974 agreement. Israel, however, contends that a secure withdrawal is currently impossible, citing several factors: the collapse of the Syrian army, the lack of an organized military force to maintain security, ongoing activity of armed Palestinian groups in the south, and the presence of Iranian-linked bases and militias that could exploit a withdrawal to reposition near the border.
- Israel firmly opposes the establishment of any Turkish military bases in central Syria, insisting on clear and specific limits on Turkish forces as part of any future agreement. In contrast, the Syrian government views Türkiye's presence as a counterbalance to Israel and Iran, especially in light of the Syrian army's weaknesses.[217]

- Israel continues to regard Syria's minority populations, especially the Druze and Kurds, as instruments to sustain its influence and leverage over the Syrian regime's internal affairs. At this sensitive juncture in Syria's history, Israel is unlikely to relinquish this advantage.[218] Many believe that Israel may consider a fragmented Syria more beneficial than a unified state capable of negotiating a "peace" agreement.[219]

Amid these challenges, a significant gap was evident between how the issue was being framed in Israel and how it was being portrayed in Syria. In Israel, the term "normalization" was frequently used, accompanied by references to the possibility of Syria joining the Abraham Accords. In Syria, however, the discourse was much more limited, cautious, and modest. From the Syrian perspective, the talks aim to establish a non-aggression pact and to update the framework of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement.[220]

Weighing the benefits and challenges of normalization with Israel, the Syrian leadership appears to face three potential options for managing its relationship with the Israeli side:

- Maintaining Syria's established position of rejecting political, economic and security normalization with Israel, while cautiously engaging with any urgent security imperatives aimed at curbing Israel's aggressive military actions inside Syrian territory.
- Gradual, partial openness and rapprochement with Israel, framed as a response to pressing political, economic and security necessities.
- Pursuing full normalization, whether bilateral or within a broader regional framework, led by Arab actors already engaged in the normalization track and the "Abraham Accords."[221]

Forecasts indicate that the likely outcome will fall between the first and second scenarios, shaped by the pressures and circumstances confronting the regime. While the political system, supported by the Syrian public, favors the first option, it will pragmatically pursue the second, seeing it as a necessary step to safeguard the regime and navigate a critical juncture.

However, the second scenario now seems more probable. On 6/1/2026, following a two-day trilateral meeting in Paris between the US, Israel and Syria, the US State Department issued a joint statement affirming both countries' commitment

"to strive toward achieving lasting security and stability arrangements for both countries" and to "establish a joint fusion mechanism… to facilitate immediate and ongoing coordination on their intelligence sharing, military de-escalation, diplomatic engagement, and commercial opportunities under the supervision of the United States."[222]

4. Lebanon

a. Development of Political Relations and Diplomatic Engagement

Socially: Palestinians in Lebanon could not expect their RCs to be spared from the war that followed Hizbullah's entry into the "Support for Gaza" battle the day after Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Like all Lebanese, they were affected by the widespread Israeli aggression from 23/9/2024 to 27/11/2024, particularly in southern Lebanon, where most Palestinian refugees live. Israel targeted several RCs, prompting mass displacement, especially after Israeli army spokesperson Avichay Adraee, on 6/10/2024, urged residents of dozens of southern villages and towns, including the Palestinian RCs in Tyre (Rashidieh, El-Buss and Burj Shemali), to move north of the Awali River.[223]

Politically: After Operation al-Aqsa Flood began on 7 October 2023, Palestinian factions, including Hamas, PIJ, Fatah and the PLO's PFLP launched attacks against Israel from Lebanese territory,[224] raising fears in Lebanon of a repeat of the 1982 Israeli invasion. Following the Hizbullah-Israel ceasefire in November 2024, focus turned to Palestinian arms in Lebanon, as leaked terms of the agreement required Lebanon to ensure border calm and prevent Palestinian groups from resuming rocket attacks.[225]

The regulation of Palestinian weapons in the RCs gained greater political significance following PA President 'Abbas's three-day visit to Beirut on 21/5/2025. A joint statement with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun affirmed the monopoly of arms by the Lebanese state, the end of any unauthorized armed presence (including in the RCs), and the prevention of using Lebanese territory as a base for military operations."[226]

During the first meeting of the joint committee overseeing Palestinian RCs in Lebanon, established on 21/5/2025, participants agreed on a phased disarmament process. Weapon withdrawals were set to begin in mid-June 2025, starting with

the Beirut RCs and then extending to others.[227] In implementation, Fatah-National Security Forces handed over their heavy and medium weapons from within the RCs in four phases.[228] Earlier, factions loyal to the former Syrian regime, including Fatah al-Intifadah and the PFLP-GC, had voluntarily surrendered weapons outside the RCs to LAF.[229]

Conversely, the Palestinian Forces Alliance, led by Hamas, argues that arms regulation in the RCs must be addressed comprehensively. Weapons should be managed by the "Joint Security Force" under the supervision of the "Palestinian Joint Action Commission," which Hamas and other factions regard as the sole authority for disarmament and other refugee-related matters, representing the largest coalition of factions both within and outside the PLO.[230]

Hamas and other factions refuse to disarm in the Lebanese RCs for several reasons. First, Palestinian weapons are seen as necessary to protect Palestinians from Israeli attacks or internal threats until the Lebanese state can ensure their security,[231] especially given historical traumas such as the massacres of Tel al-Za'tar, Sabra and Shatila.[232] Second, Iran and Hizbullah likely share the view that disarming Palestinians would embolden the Lebanese government to push for Hizbullah's complete disarmament as well.[233] Third, Hamas fears that giving up its arms in Lebanon could pave the way for similar pressures in GS.

Amid Hamas's and other Palestinian factions' refusal to disarm, media reports suggest that Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam is seeking to reorganize the Palestinian presence in Lebanon under the so-called "eight provisions." Key measures reportedly include designating armed individuals who refuse to surrender their weapons as judicially wanted, establishing a PA-affiliated security force to coordinate with LAF in disarmament operations inside and outside the RCs, and conditioning PA financial and service assistance, amid UNRWA's decline, on compliance with the disarmament plan while excluding those who refuse.[234]

b. Relations with Israel

On the Military Level

Although Hizbullah denied prior knowledge of or involvement in Operation al-Aqsa Flood,[235] led by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023, its swift and direct engagement in the ensuing war between Hamas and other Palestinian resistance forces, on the one hand, and Israel, on the other, was widely recognized.

This response reflected its alignment with the so-called "Axis of Resistance" and its status as the bloc's most powerful military force after Iran.[236] Furthermore, Hizbullah appears to have viewed the war as an opportunity to rebuild its standing among Lebanese and Arab public opinion after the reputational damage caused by its support for Bashar al-Assad's regime in Damascus.[237]

Military confrontations between Israel and Hizbullah in Lebanon began after Hizbullah announced the opening of a "support front" for the GS the day following Operation al-Aqsa Flood. One year into its assault on the GS, Israel intensified military pressure on Hizbullah to shift the balance of confrontation.[238] On 18/9/2024, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant announced that the war's "center of gravity is moving north. We are diverting forces, resources, and energy toward the north."[239] Israel carried out coordinated explosions of pagers and walkie-talkies held by thousands of Hizbullah commanders and members on 17–18/9/2024, killing 42 and wounding almost 3,500.[240]

On 23/9/2024, Israel launched Operation Northern Arrows, the most intense aerial campaign in Lebanon since the July 2006 war.[241] The strikes targeted Hizbullah's weapons and ammunition depots, rocket and artillery launch platforms, and first- and second-tier leadership, including Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah, who was assassinated on 27/9/2024.[242] On 1/10/2024, Israel began a ground incursion into Hizbullah's border positions in southern Lebanon.[243] The confrontations left approximately 4 thousand Lebanese and more than 100 Israelis dead, and displaced around 60 thousand Israelis and over one million Lebanese.[244]

Despite the ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel brokered by the US and France on 26/11/2024,[245] Israel continued ground incursions and air raids, recording over 7,500 aerial and roughly 2,500 ground violations north of the Blue Line (within Lebanese territory).[246] Israel has also delayed completing its withdrawal from southern Lebanon, retaining control over five strategic sites along the Blue Line: Hamames Hill, Nabi 'Uwaydah Hill (Mount al-Deir), Mount Blat, Labbuneh, and al-'Aziyyeh Hill.[247]

According to some reports, Israel seeks to partition southern Lebanon along the Litani River into three distinct zones. The first, the Blue Line, would remain unchanged. The second, referred to as the "Red Line," would serve as a security zone in which Israel aims to maintain a military and security presence, covering

areas it still occupies with established installations and fortifications. The third, the "Green Line," is envisioned as a buffer or economic zone under US guidance, subject to specific restrictions on residents and entrants, potentially encompassing extensive residential areas where inhabitants might be denied the right of return.[248]

To address this issue, the US Ambassador to Türkiye and Special Envoy for Syria and Lebanon, Tom Barrack, presented during his first visit to Beirut on 19/6/2025, a six-page paper demanding the complete disarmament of Hizbullah and all other resistance factions in Lebanon by the end of 2025. On 3/8/2025, he submitted the final approved version, titled "Consolidating the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement," to the Lebanese government after a series of exchanges. The paper set a 120-day, four-phase timetable for Hizbullah's disarmament and LAF's deployment in the south, in exchange for Israel's cessation of raids and gradual withdrawal from occupied areas.[249]

On 5/8/2025, the Lebanese Council of Ministers tasked the army with preparing a plan to inventory all armed groups' weapons, including Hizbullah's, by the end of 2025.[250] On 7/8/2025, it approved the US plan consolidating the ceasefire with Israel and setting a timetable for Hizbullah's disarmament.[251] In September 2025, the Lebanese government adopted a five-phase army plan to centralize arms under state control and disarm Hizbullah. The first phase, lasting three months until the end of November 2025, targeted the complete removal of weapons south of the Litani River, while the remaining phases would cover the rest of Lebanon, including Beirut and the Beqaa Valley, without fixed deadlines.[252]

Hizbullah and its Secretary-General, Sheikh Naim Qassem, repeatedly criticized the government's efforts to disarm the group, arguing that such demands serve Israel's agenda.[253] Qassem warned that the Lebanese government would be "fully responsible for any internal unrest or destruction" if it pursued disarmament.[254] He set out four priorities the Lebanese government must address before any discussion of Hizbullah's weapons: stopping Israeli strikes despite the ceasefire, securing Israel's withdrawal from occupied areas in Lebanon and the five hills captured in the last war, releasing prisoners taken during the conflict, and initiating the reconstruction of war-damaged areas.[255] Hizbullah stressed that the question of exclusive armament is not subject to foreign pressure or Israeli coercion but must be resolved nationally within a comprehensive strategy for security, defense, and the safeguarding of national sovereignty.[256]

Given Hizbullah's firm refusal to surrender its arms, the Lebanese government seems hesitant to use force to enforce the state's monopoly on weapons, fearing a potential civil war.[257] Israel viewed this hesitation as a retreat from Lebanon's decision to disarm Hizbullah,[258] prompting an escalation in Israeli threats of a renewed military campaign should Hizbullah fail to relinquish its weapons by the end of 2025.[259] This subsequently materialized in late February 2026, as Israel launched a renewed large-scale offensive, sought to expand its occupied areas in southern Lebanon, and hostilities with Hizbullah resumed.

On the Political Level

In parallel with the military and political efforts surrounding Hizbullah's disarmament, a separate diplomatic dispute emerged between Lebanon and Israel over ending the mandate of the UNIFIL, established under UNSC Resolutions 425 and 426 of 19/3/1978. On 19/8/2025, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar wrote to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio calling for the termination of UNIFIL's mission, arguing that it had "failed in its fundamental task – to prevent Hezbollah's entrenchment south of the Litani River."[260] While Israel accused UNIFIL of failing to curb arms smuggling along the border, Lebanon, backed by the international community, maintained that its mandate is limited to monitoring and support rather than direct intervention.[261] Although the force does not prevent Israeli attacks, it has been viewed as the UN witness to Israel's violations of the ceasefire and UNSC Resolution 1701.[262] Lebanese President Joseph Aoun therefore reaffirmed his country's commitment to maintaining UNIFIL until Resolution 1701 is fully implemented and LAF's deployment to the international border is completed.[263] Consequently, on 28/8/2025, the UNSC unanimously adopted a resolution extending UNIFIL's mandate for a final term until 31/12/2026.[264]

Meanwhile, regarding developments in the normalization file, the official Lebanese position rejecting normalization with Israel appears unchanged,[265] although the rhetoric has grown more conciliatory and diplomatic. This shift has been reflected in references to a comprehensive "peace," the "Arab Peace Initiative," Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, cooperation with the US, avoidance of military confrontation with Israel, and positive official engagement with collecting the resistance's weapons. A symbolic yet meaningful step came in December 2025, when President General Joseph Aoun appointed a civilian figure, the former ambassador and lawyer Simon Karam, to head the Lebanese

delegation at meetings of the Ceasefire Monitoring Committee with Israel. The presidency noted that the move responded to the appreciated efforts of the US government, which chairs the five-party committee (Lebanon, France, Israel, the US and UNIFIL).[266]

For its part, the office of the Israeli Prime Minister announced that Benjamin Netanyahu had has instructed the Acting Director of the National Security Council (NSC) to send a representative on his behalf (Senior director for foreign policy at the NSC Uri Resnick), describing the meeting with Lebanese officials as "an initial attempt to establish a basis for a relationship and economic cooperation between Israel and Lebanon."[267]

5. KSA and the Gulf States

Gulf states' positions toward the Palestine issue in general, and Israel's war on GS in particular, are shaped by several key considerations, most notably:

- Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states regard the continuation of the war on the GS as a serious threat to regional stability and a potential trigger for wider escalation, particularly involving Iran, Hizbullah and the Houthis. Indeed, this risk materialized in the large-scale Israeli-US attack on Iran in late February 2026 and the ensuing Iranian responses.
- Gulf states seek to balance their support for the Palestine issue with their long-standing strategic ties to the US and Western countries aligned with Israel.[268]
- Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain share a negative security outlook toward armed factions aligned with the Iran-led Axis of Resistance, including Palestinian groups such as Hamas and PIJ. They also view "political Islam" unfavorably, particularly given Hamas's ideological ties to the MB Movement. By contrast, Qatar hosts Hamas leaders and has been the largest donor of aid to GS since Hamas's takeover in June 2007.[269] Consequently, Qatar's mediation role expanded in both Hamas-Fatah reconciliation and ceasefire arrangements between the movement and Israel.[270] In addition, Qatar maintains strong relations with Iran and the MB Movement; notably, these ties were among the key drivers of the Gulf crisis that began in June 2017 between Qatar on one side and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt on the other.[271]
- Gulf states differ in their stance on normalization with Israel. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are the only Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members with no formal relations, whereas the UAE and Bahrain maintain full diplomatic, economic and

cultural ties under the 2020 Abraham Accords. Qatar and Oman, by contrast, keep limited coordination channels without formal relations.[272]

- The Gulf states, among the wealthiest in the Arab world due to their oil resources, wield the greatest influence over aid and reconstruction efforts in the WB and GS.

In light of these factors, the Gulf states' stance and actions on the Palestine issue during 2024–2025 were as follows:

a. Position on the Peace Process and the PA

At the 45th and 46th Gulf Summits, held in December 2024 and December 2025 respectively, the GCC states reaffirmed their support for the Palestinians' right to an independent state along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and for the implementation of a two-state solution.[273]

Saudi Arabia, through Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman[274] and the Foreign Ministry,[275] has reaffirmed that it will not establish diplomatic relations with Israel without the establishment of a Palestinian state. The Kingdom also plays a crucial role in financially supporting the PA, particularly amid its severe fiscal crisis caused by Israel withholding tax revenues, which constitute 68% of the PA's budget. In this context, Saudi Arabia provided a $90 million grant to the Palestinian treasury in early December 2025.[276] Moreover, Saudi Arabia has been instrumental in persuading several European countries and traditional allies of Israel, including France, the UK, Canada and Australia, to recognize Palestine and endorse the two-state solution.[277] In partnership with France, Saudi Arabia co-chaired the "High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution" at UN headquarters in New York on 28–29/7/2025. The conference's final statement, the New York Declaration, called for "taking tangible, timebound, and irreversible steps for the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine." Participants agreed "to take collective action… to achieve a just, peaceful and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the effective implementation of the two-State solution."[278]

For its part, the UAE has articulated a vision for resolving the Palestine issue and shaping GS after the war based on several pillars: advancing the two-state solution through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state living in "peace and

security" alongside Israel; laying the foundations for a competent government that would pave the way for the unification of the WB and GS under a single, legitimate PA (The UAE holds the view that the new prime minister, Mohammad Mustafa, appointed by President Mahmud 'Abbas in March 2024 to succeed Mohammad Shtayyeh, lacks the independence and capability to implement the necessary reforms);[279] and halting settlement construction and violence in the WB and East Jerusalem.[280] Moreover, a Middle East Eye report indicated that the US, Israel, and the UAE are cooperating to establish a post-war governing body for GS, known as the "National Committee," composed of Palestinian business figures and leaders, many reportedly loyal to former Fatah leader Mohammed Dahlan, who could eventually be installed as a successor to President Mahmud 'Abbas.[281]

Qatar has reiterated that the only path to stability and prosperity in the region is through a comprehensive, just solution to the Palestine issue based on international law, UN resolutions, the end of occupation, the cessation of settlement activities and the affirmation of the two-state solution based on the 1967 borders. It stressed the need to renew international efforts to ensure the fair and rightful step of accepting Palestine as a full member state of the UN.[282]

b. The Position on the Resistance Project and Hamas

According to Israeli media reports, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have declined to assume a central role in the post-war phase or in implementing Trump's plan to end the war in GS, including participation in security forces, civil administration, and reconstruction financing, "unless it is guaranteed that Hamas will not be part of the governing body and will surrender its weapons." Furthermore, Saudi Arabia has conditioned its involvement on the early participation of the PA in reconstruction and its assumption of governmental authority. In contrast, Qatar has maintained that "Hamas has the right to participate in Palestinian governance. not just in Gaza's security forces but also in the broader political system."[283]

During the war, Qatar's Al Jazeera served as the main outlet reporting on the Palestinian situation, exposing Israeli aggression in GS and the WB, and broadcasting Hamas materials and supportive analyses,[284]prompting Israel to close its offices in the country.[285] In contrast, Saudi and UAE media, including Al Arabiya, Al Hadath, and Sky News Arabia (owned by Saudi Arabia and the UAE), took a hostile stance toward Hamas and Operation al-Aqsa Flood,[286] leading GS Government Media Office to accuse them of echoing Israel's war narrative.[287]

Qatar has distinguished itself among Gulf states by hosting members of Hamas's political bureau since 2012, a stance that exposed it to sustained Israeli and US pressure following Operation al-Aqsa Flood on October 7, 2023. In the aftermath, Israel launched a coordinated media and diplomatic campaign aimed at Qatar, emphasizing the financial aid it provided to Gaza's population and alleging that part of these funds was diverted to support Hamas's tunnel infrastructure.[288] These pressures reached their peak with an Israeli strike on Qatar on 9/9/2025, targeting the Hamas negotiating delegation in an operation code-named "Summit of Fire."[289] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu defended the strike, asserting that it "was entirely justified" as it targeted senior Hamas leaders responsible for the October 7 attacks and because Qatar "is tied to Hamas" and "It strengthens Hamas. It hosts Hamas. It funds Hamas."[290] Qatar, however, countered that its hosting of Hamas leadership had been conducted with the knowledge and acquiescence of the US administration, underscoring its critical and constructive role in mediation efforts, ceasefire initiatives, and the pursuit of a just "peace" in the Middle East.

The Israeli targeting of a Hamas delegation in Qatar has revived debate over Doha's continued hosting of leaders from Hamas, raising the question of whether this presence constitutes a source of diplomatic leverage, given that it remains Qatar's principal asset for mediating the Palestine issue and sustaining a distinctive regional role, or, alternatively, a direct security liability.[291] The continued residence of Hamas Political Bureau figures in Doha, and the movement's maintenance of its current level of relations with Qatar, appears to be closely linked to Doha's constructive engagement with the full spectrum of Palestinian actors, including the leaderships of PLO, PA, Fatah and other factions, as well as its comparatively open approach toward "political Islam" and resistance movements. Accordingly, Qatar is likely to sustain its established policy unless subjected to exceptional pressure from the US; as of this writing, there has been no absolute US objection to Hamas's presence in Doha. Furthermore, Qatar's relationship with Hamas is closely tied to post-war scenarios and to the movement's prospective role in the future of GS and the Palestine issue more broadly. This trajectory would be reinforced should regional and international understandings emerge that preserve a role for Hamas in administering GS or participating in the Palestinian political system.[292] It is also important to recognize that Hamas retains a broad popular base and considerable factional and political weight that cannot be overlooked.

Significantly, the Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman, Sheikh Ahmad al-Khalili, adopted positions supportive of the resistance. On the very day of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, 7/10/2023, he issued his first statement via his account on the X platform, declaring: "May Allah grant success to the valiant Palestinian resistance in defending its legitimate rights and in its steadfast confrontation with the brutal occupying enemy." Moreover, in a speech delivered on his behalf by his son, Sheikh Aflah, at the Islamic Summit Conference, al-Khalili further urged the Islamic community "to spare no effort in strengthening the resistance and to welcome all who support it."[293] Al-Khalili compared Israel's war on GS to the Battle of al-Ahzab (the Battle of the Trench). In a post on the X platform, he argued that what is befalling "our brothers in the Gaza as a result of Zionist criminality, supported by tyrannical states, closely mirrors the circumstances of the Battle of al-Ahzab." Furthermore, he contended that "today's hypocrites closely resemble those of the past, and just as the ranks were clearly distinguished in that difficult moment, so too are they today, with *Allah* fully aware of those who falter….. Yet, no matter how the enemies unite, the sincere believer remains certain of *Allah*'s victory."[294]

Moreover, such positions may help explain why fighters from Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, raised Khalili's image during the handover of the bodies of Israeli captives.[295]

c. Position on Israel's War on GS

Among the Gulf states, Qatar assumed the most prominent political role during the war, acting, alongside Egypt and the US, as a mediator between Israel and Hamas, owing to its established ties with Hamas. This mediation successfully secured ceasefire agreements, facilitated the delivery of aid to GS, and enabled prisoner exchanges between the parties, most notably in January[296] and October 2025.[297]

In a joint statement with the foreign ministers of five Arab and Muslim countries (Jordan, Egypt, Türkiye, Indonesia, and Pakistan), Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar welcomed the invitation extended by US President Donald Trump to join BoP.[298] Furthermore, Ali al-Thawadi, Minister at the Qatari Prime Minister's Office for Strategic Affairs, and Reem Al Hashimi, UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation, were appointed to the Gaza Executive Board,[299] notwithstanding

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's objection to Qatar's participation in the body.[300]

On the humanitarian front, several Arab states have extended diverse forms of assistance to the Palestinian people. For instance, the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre launched a public campaign in November 2023, raising over 745 million Saudi riyals (about $199 million) by February 2026.[301] Moreover, the UAE's Operation Chivalrous Knight 3 has continued to provide extensive humanitarian assistance, including the establishment of water desalination plants in Egyptian Rafah with a combined daily capacity of two million gallons (about 7.6 million liters).[302]

Qatari relief efforts have likewise persisted. By 7/2/2025, it had supplied approximately 12.5 million liters of fuel to sustain hospitals, power generators and other essential services.[303] Moreover, on 26/9/2024, it announced a $100 million to address broader humanitarian needs in GS, including support for UNRWA.[304]

Meanwhile, on 6/8/2025, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Social Affairs reported that the final proceeds of the three-day campaign "Kuwait By Your Side – A Response to Gaza" raised a total of $37.6 million.[305] The Oman Charitable Organization reported that, since the onset of Israel's assault on GS and through July 2025, it had organized 16 direct airlifts to Egypt and Jordan transporting medical and relief supplies, while also receiving the first group of war-injured Palestinians for treatment in Oman.[306] In March 2024, the Royal Humanitarian Foundation (RHF) and the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) in cooperation with the Royal Jordanian Air Force announced a joint operation to deliver humanitarian aid to the Palestinian population in the GS.[307] These initiatives complement the ongoing relief and humanitarian activities of numerous charitable organizations, particularly those based in Kuwait and Qatar.

Domestically, the Monitor of Hajj and Umrah Violations condemned the Saudi authorities' intensified arrests of pilgrims solely for demonstrating solidarity with the Palestine issue through the display of Palestinian flags.[308] Likewise, government authorities in the UAE and Saudi Arabia strictly prohibit any events, protests, or public demonstrations in support of the GS or in opposition to Israel.[309] In a similar vein, Bahraini security authorities have suspended the organization of weekly solidarity events and demonstrations for Palestine, citing an official government directive as justification.[310]

d. Relations with Israel and Developments in Normalization

Political and Diplomatic Aspects

Despite statements from the US, under both former President Joe Biden[311] and current President Donald Trump,[312] indicating progress toward normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia, Riyadh has consistently reaffirmed that the establishment of a Palestinian state remains a prerequisite for diplomatic relations with Israel.[313] Analyses suggest that, while Saudi Arabia does not fundamentally oppose normalization, it seeks three key concessions from the US in exchange: authorization to construct a civilian nuclear reactor with domestically enriched uranium, approval to acquire advanced weaponry such as F-35 fighter jets, and the conclusion of a joint defense agreement ratified by Congress, obligating the US to defend Saudi Arabia in the event of an external threat. Simultaneously, Saudi Arabia has required Israel to commit to a process leading to a two-state solution, entailing the establishment of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital within three to five years, a freeze on settlement activity in the occupied territories, and the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the GS.[314] Given the Netanyahu government's steadfast opposition to the establishment of a Palestinian state and the Israeli Knesset's overwhelming vote on 17/7/2024,[315] against such a state, prospects for normalization between the two countries in the near term have become highly unlikely. The US appears to have acknowledged this reality, setting aside the prior requirement of normalization with Israel and instead pursuing bilateral agreements to accommodate Saudi demands.[316] In November 2025, President Trump authorized the sale of F-35 aircraft to Saudi Arabia, designated the kingdom as a "major non-NATO ally," and confirmed the potential for a civil nuclear agreement.[317] Taken together, these developments indicate that, while Saudi Arabia currently refrains from establishing formal political ties with Israel, nevertheless, it does not preclude limited forms of coordination and communication, as will be further discussed.

Qatar's stance aligned with that of Saudi Arabia in conditioning normalization with Israel on the establishment of a Palestinian state.[318] Between 2024 and 2025, tensions between Qatar and Israel intensified, culminating in the Israeli aggression against Qatar in September 2025. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that "There is currently an attempt to impose a blockade on Israel by various entities and countries, led by Qatar," adding, "This includes, first and

foremost, a media blockade funded by vast sums of money from Qatar and other countries, such as China."[319]

In response, Qatar encouraged Arab and Muslim countries to reassess their diplomatic and economic ties with Israel and pursue legal measures against it.[320] The US swiftly intervened to ease the dispute: the White House reported that "President Donald J. Trump hosted a trilateral phone call with His Excellency Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and His Excellency Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani of Qatar," where "the leaders accepted the president's proposal to establish a trilateral mechanism to enhance coordination, improve communication, resolve mutual grievances." It added, "As a first step, Prime Minister Netanyahu expressed his deep regret" that "Israel violated Qatari sovereignty and affirmed that Israel will not conduct such an attack again in the future."[321]

Among all Gulf states, Kuwait maintains the most stringent stance regarding normalization with Israel. In August 2025, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior reiterated that "the State of Kuwait does not impose any restrictions on the entry of citizens of any nationality into its territory, with the sole exception of Israeli nationals."[322]

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman for Political Affairs, Khalifa bin Ali bin Issa Al Harthy, stated, according to the Russian Sputnik Agency, that Oman has no intention of normalizing relations with Israel. Commenting on normalization, he added, "Israel exploited it to abuse the Palestinians, procrastinate and delay, without giving them their rights to establish their independent state."[323]

By contrast, diplomatic engagement between the UAE and Israel proceeded uninterrupted throughout 2024–2025. In November 2024, Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi, Chairman of the UAE Federal National Council's Committee on Defense, Interior and Foreign Affairs, visited Israel to convey condolences to the family of Rabbi Zvi Kogan, who had been killed in the UAE.[324] Subsequently, in March 2025, the UAE hosted several heads of Israeli settlements, at a time when Israel was moving toward the annexation of WB.[325] In addition, two meetings took place in the UAE between the Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and his Israeli counterpart, Gideon Sa'ar, the first in January 2025[326] and the second in April 2025.[327] Notably, when the UAE requested that Israel withdraw its

ambassador to Abu Dhabi, Yossi Shelley, this was not in response to Israel's war on GS. Rather, it followed an incident in an Abu Dhabi bar, in which, according to Emirati authorities, he acted in an "undignified" manner and crossed "a huge red line in a place like Abu Dhabi." [328]

With regard to Bahrain, in October 2025, the newly appointed Israeli ambassador to Manama, Shmuel Revel, formally presented his credentials to King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. This development followed Bahrain's earlier announcement, in November 2023, that its ambassador to Israel had returned home "in support of the Palestine issue," concomitant with the departure of the Israeli ambassador.[329]

Trade and Economic Relations

The UAE accounted for about 70.4% of Arab states' trade with Israel in 2025, a share it had largely sustained over 2023–2024. According to CBS, UAE-Israel trade relations continued to expand. Israeli exports to the UAE reached about $634 million in 2025, compared to about $501 million in 2024, whereas it was $627 million in 2023. Israeli imports from the UAE increased to roughly $2,575 million in 2025, up from around $2,316 million in 2023 (see table 1/6).

Amid the blockade imposed by Ansar Allah (Houthis) on Israeli-linked vessels transiting the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab Strait, the UAE played a central role by establishing "an overland logistics corridor from Dubai to Tel Aviv via Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and Bahrain repurposed its ports to serve as alternate shipping hubs for Israeli goods arriving from India and China."[330]

Security and Military Relations

In April 2024, unverified reports have circulated suggesting potential Gulf cooperation in intercepting the Iranian attack,[331] as well as in the provision of fuel to Israel.[332] Concurrently, the Israeli Air Force participated in the annual Iniochos exercises in Greece alongside 11 other countries, including the UAE and Qatar.[333] In June 2025, the Israeli Ministry of Defense reported that Israel's military-industrial exports reached approximately $14.7 billion in 2024, with 12% of these contracts concluded with Arab states under the Abraham Accords, such as the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco.[334]

The Israeli strike on Doha on 9/9/2025[335] constituted a watershed in Gulf-Israeli relations. In Gulf strategic assessments, Israel consequently shifted from being

viewed as a potentially reliable security partner against Iran to being perceived as a direct and enduring source of threat. More broadly, these developments, together with Israel's pattern of regional assertiveness, prompted Gulf states to recalibrate their defense posture, strengthening cooperation in response to Israel rather than in coordination with it, particularly as US security guarantees appeared increasingly inadequate.[336] In this context, the Gulf response was both prompt and resolute. The GCC Joint Defense Council convened an extraordinary session in Doha and resolved to "increase the exchange of intelligence information," "accelerate the work of the Gulf Joint Task Force for the Early Warning System against Ballistic Missiles," "conduct joint exercises between air operation centers and air defense forces," and "link defence systems to confront all risks and challenges."[337] The GCC Secretary-General, Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi, further indicated that the six member states "have been weighing a unified missile defense system," including "creating a joint missile shield to counter attacks on their territory."[338]

6. Iraq

Since the outset of the war in GS, the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Muhammad Shia' al-Sudani sought to respond in a conventional manner, expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people while refraining from military involvement.[339] This approach aimed to balance Iraq's security and economic ties with the US against the political, religious and military influence Iran exerts over many Iraqi political forces and armed factions.[340] Consequently, the Iraqi government concentrated on providing financial and humanitarian aid and filing complaints with the UNSC condemning Israel's violations of Iraqi airspace.[341] At the same time, Iraq maintained a firm stance against normalization with Israel, voiced reservations over LAS summit resolutions, particularly references to the "two-state solution" and "East Jerusalem,"[342] and insisted that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu be excluded from the Sharm El-Sheikh Summit on GS on 13/10/2025.[343]

Nevertheless, Iraqi factions largely disregarded the government's political considerations. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, which encompasses Kata'ib Hizbullah, Harakat Hizbullah al-Nujaba, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), Tashkil Al-Warithin, and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada',[344] carried out 623 attacks by 24/11/2024: 90 in Iraq, 331 in Israel, 90 in Syria, and 9 at sea.[345] Notable operations included the "Tower 22" strike in Jordan in late January 2024, which killed three

US soldiers and wounded dozens,[346] and an early October 2024 attack on an Israeli military base in the occupied Golan, resulting in two Israeli fatalities and over twenty injuries.[347]

Since November 2024, Iraqi factions have ceased their operations against Israel without issuing any formal announcement. This development coincided with the ceasefire between Israel and Hizbullah in Lebanon, as well as with the temporary truce between Israel and Hamas in January 2025. Notably, however, the Iraqi factions did not resume their operations when Israel returned to the war on GS following the collapse of the truce in March 2025.[348] This restraint may be explained, at least in part, by the Israeli warning issued on 18/11/2024, when Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar addressed a letter to the UNSC affirming Israel's right to self-defense should the Iraqi government prove unable or unwilling to restrain armed groups from attacking Israel.[349] This was accompanied by repeated Israeli violations of Iraqi airspace, apparently intended to signal to Iraqi armed factions that they had come within Israel's operational reach.[350] In addition, the US pressured Prime Minister Muhammad Shia' al-Sudani to curb attacks by Iraqi factions.[351]

Despite the cessation of attacks, Israel continues to threaten strikes within Iraq, citing the need to neutralize these groups' strategic capabilities, including drones and medium- and long-range missiles,[352] as well as the presence of Hamas and Houthi offices in Baghdad.[353] It further justifies potential operations by asserting that Iran is shifting its military focus from Lebanon, Syria and GS to Iraq in preparation for a possible confrontation.[354]

7. Yemen

Since the Palestinian resistance carried out its military operation in the GS perimeter on 7/10/2023, Operation al-Aqsa Flood, followed by Israel's counter-operation Operation Iron Swords, Ansar Allah (the Houthis) contributed to supporting GS over the ensuing two years in several ways:

a. Conducting a sustained series of missile and unmanned combat aerial vehicle attacks targeting Israel's interior, its ports on the Red Sea (Eilat) and the Mediterranean (Ashdod and Haifa), and Ben Gurion Airport.[355]

b. They established a maritime blockade by targeting shipping bound for Israel in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, striking both Israeli vessels and foreign ships

calling at its ports.[356] This prompted the Israeli Administration of Shipping and Ports (ASP) to suspend operations at the Port of Eilat.[357]

The key distinction between Ansar Allah (the Houthis) and other groups within the Axis of Resistance, particularly Lebanese Hizbullah and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, lies in the fact that the Houthis' military capabilities are essentially state-level. Furthermore, Yemen's strategic position adjacent to the Bab al-Mandab Strait enabled them to exert a highly significant maritime influence on the movement of Israeli and allied vessels. Overall, the Houthis emerge as the most active and influential actors within the Axis of Resistance.[358]

c. Efforts were made to impose a comprehensive aerial blockade on Israel through repeated strikes on airports, particularly Ben Gurion International Airport, prompting several international airlines to suspend or cancel flights to Tel Aviv.[359]

In this context, 'Abdul Malik al-Houthi, leader of the Ansar Allah movement, stated that they had carried out 1,679 military operations from the outset of support for GS until early May 2025, involving rockets, drones and naval craft. He also stated that Yemen had been subjected to 2,843 air and naval strikes, resulting in hundreds of deaths and injuries.[360]

Since the announcement of the ceasefire in GS on 10/10/2025, Ansar Allah has not claimed responsibility for any new attacks against Israel. On 10/11/2025, Ansar Allah sent a message to the Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, indicating a suspension of their attacks on Israel and on ships in the Red Sea. The message emphasized that they were closely monitoring developments and stated that "if the enemy resumes its aggression against Gaza, we will resume our military operations," while maintaining a blockade on Israeli navigation in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea.[361]

Meanwhile, Israel assumed a defensive stance in response to rocket attacks from the Ansar Allah movement since October 2023, focusing on intercepting Yemeni rockets and drones while coordinating with the US to neutralize threats directed at its territory.[362]

Direct US and UK intervention in Yemen commenced on 12/1/2024, with the US pursuing a twofold strategy: an international naval defense initiative, Operation Prosperity Guardian, involving 20 countries, alongside two air campaigns. The first campaign, Operation Poseidon Archer, conducted between 12/1/2024 and

17/1/2025 during Joe Biden's administration in coordination with six states, and the second, Operation Rough Rider, executed from 15/3/2025 to 6/5/2025 under Donald Trump, both aimed to degrade the military capabilities of Ansar Allah. Together, these operations comprised 774 airstrikes, resulting in 550 fatalities.[363]

However, following the US-Ansar Allah agreement of 6/5/2025 to halt mutual attacks in the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait, brokered by Oman,[364] Israel's strategy shifted from a largely defensive posture to a more offensive one. Notably, the agreement was limited to suspending attacks on US vessels in the Red Sea; it neither required a cessation of attacks on Israeli ships in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea nor mandated an end to missile and drone strikes against Israel.[365] In this context, Israel moved toward preemptive and preventive strikes, while refraining from opening a sustained daily combat front with Ansar Allah.[366] Since the 6/5/2025 ceasefire, Israeli airstrikes on Yemen have continued, targeting Sanaa International Airport, the port of Hudaydah, and several key civilian facilities in and around the capital.[367] Moreover, in the first strike directly targeting political leadership, Ansar Allah announced on 30/8/2025 the killing of its prime minister, Ahmad al-Rahawi, along with nine civilian ministers, in Israeli airstrikes that struck a cabinet meeting in Sanaa.[368]

It appears that Tel Aviv has concentrated on targeting civilian, economic and service infrastructure in areas controlled by Ansar Allah. These relatively soft targets are easier to strike and costly to rehabilitate; cumulatively, such operations are intended to intensify humanitarian suffering and, over time, erode the group's supportive social base.[369] However, this approach extends beyond exerting pressure on vital sectors. It also aims to degrade the Houthis' military capabilities by disrupting energy supplies. In this regard, Israel justified its strikes on power stations by alleging their use for "military activities," and defended its attack on Sanaa International Airport on the grounds that it was used "for transferring weapons and operatives."[370] Furthermore, Tel Aviv has portrayed its attacks on the port of Hudaydah and Sanaa International Airport as necessary to sustain the naval and air blockade imposed on Ansar Allah, framing them as a direct response to the group's attempts to impose an air and maritime blockade on Israel.[371]

A comparison between the Yemeni front and the other fronts (GS, Lebanon and Iran) demonstrates a clear divergence in Israel's operational approach. In the

latter three arenas, Israel prioritized the elimination of senior political and military leadership before turning to infrastructure. In Yemen, however, it initially focused on dismantling material assets and economic infrastructure, only gradually expanding its operations to include executive-level figures. Yet it has thus far failed to reach the top tier of the leadership hierarchy,[372] notwithstanding its successful assassination of the group's Chief of General Staff, Muhammad 'Abdul Karim al-Ghamari.[373]

More broadly, Israel and its allies have been unable to neutralize the Houthi threat. This limitation stems primarily from intelligence deficiencies attributable to two interrelated factors. First, the geography of the Houthis' sphere of influence presents structural obstacles. Yemen lies beyond Israel's established surveillance zones, such as Lebanon, Syria and GS. Moreover, Israel's earlier assessment that Yemen posed a limited threat meant that no sustained intelligence infrastructure was developed there, resulting in weak human intelligence networks. The mountainous terrain of northern Yemen further provides natural concealment, reducing the effectiveness of satellite and aerial surveillance.[374] Second, Yemen's underdeveloped communications infrastructure constrains intelligence collection. Its reliance on wired networks, combined with fragile telecommunications systems and slow internet speeds, significantly hampers Israel's ability to gather actionable intelligence.[375]

Accordingly, Israel's anticipated strategy toward Yemen is likely to center on the following:

a. Intensifying Israel's intelligence-gathering operations in Yemen through several avenues:

- Establishing a new unit comprising 200 intelligence officers tasked specifically with collecting intelligence on Yemen.[376]
- Recruiting local agents through financial inducements, particularly given Yemen's severe poverty.[377] In this context, in November 2025, a court affiliated with the Ansar Allah (Houthi) movement sentenced 17 individuals to death by firing squad after convicting them of espionage on behalf of the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia.[378]
- Dismantling the military communications systems of Ansar Allah by disabling the wired and fiber-optic infrastructure across areas under their control in

Yemen. This, in turn, was intended to compel reliance on internet-based and wireless communications systems, which are more susceptible to direct interception by US spy satellites or electronic intelligence platforms installed on US warships operating in the region, thereby enhancing intelligence collection capabilities. In this light, the decision by Starlink in September 2024 to officially launch its satellite internet service in Yemen, making it the first country in the Middle East to receive the service, may be interpreted.[379]

- The recruitment of UN personnel working in Yemen. In this regard, ‘Abdul Wahid Abu Ras, Acting Foreign Minister in the Ansar Allah (Houthi) government, announced that 43 Yemeni UN employees detained by the group would be prosecuted on suspicion of links to the Israeli airstrike that assassinated Prime Minister Ahmad Ghalib al-Rahawi, appointed by Ansar Allah, along with several ministers in August 2025.[380]

b. The potential replication of Israel’s targeting of Hamas’s Political Bureau in Qatar; more specifically, the prospect that Israel may undertake similar operations against Houthi leaders residing in the Sultanate of Oman.[381]

c. Coordination with other states to counter Ansar Allah, mainly Ethiopia. On 5/5/2025, Israel’s Foreign Minister, Gideon Sa‘ar, visited Addis Ababa, stressing that “Terrorism is a shared threat to our peoples,” linking Somalia’s al-Shabaab with Ansar Allah in Yemen. An INSS paper argues that “the Houthi aggression” gives “Israel a chance to strengthen its ties with pragmatic Arab states and position itself as a stabilizing force in the region.” Given limited prospects for cooperation with Arab Red Sea states, the paper recommends exploring “alternative avenues for establishing regional partnerships or to expand the existing organizations in a way that allows for more effective action,” positioning Ethiopia as a primary candidate for collaboration.[382] In this context, Israeli officials view that the recognition of the Republic of Somaliland “secures a strategic foothold near critical shipping routes, enhancing defense against threats like Houthi attacks and Iranian influence.” In response, Ansar Allah leader ‘Abdul Malik al-Houthi asserted that any Israeli military presence in Somaliland constitutes aggression against Somalia and Yemen and would thus be considered a military target.[383]

d. Pressuring the US to intensify its measures against Ansar Allah. In this regard, the UNSC adopted a resolution by 13 votes in favor, with Russia and China

abstaining, renewing the sanctions regime (asset freeze and travel ban) for one year, until 14/11/2026. The measures apply, until November 2025, to approximately ten individuals, most of them affiliated with Ansar Allah, as well as to the group as an entity.[384]

e. Urging the US to resume strikes against Ansar Allah.[385]

It is worth noting that certain political actors opposed to Ansar Allah attempted to instrumentalize the group's involvement in supporting GS for their own political ends. In doing so, however, they appeared to converge with the Israeli narrative regarding Ansar Allah's operations. In this vein, the Chairman of the Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad al-'Alimi, accused Ansar Allah of having brought Israel into Yemen.[386] The Yemeni government likewise called for urgent measures to counter what it described as Houthi threats to international maritime navigation.[387]

Furthermore, the Israeli newspaper *Maariv* reported that the President of the Southern Transitional Council in Yemen, Aidarus al-Zubaidi, cautioned that eliminating the Houthis was unfeasible, framing southern independence "not just as a local aspiration but as part of a wider commitment to stability in the region." He further maintained that "an independent southern Yemeni state would pave the way for entering the Abraham Accords." According to the report, an independent South Yemen could constitute a strategic ally for Israel, particularly given its strategic position overlooking the Bab al-Mandab Strait, thereby limiting Iranian influence and strengthening maritime security.[388]

8. Algeria

Algeria joined the UNSC as a non-permanent member in January 2024 for a two-year term (2024–2025). Upon assuming its seat, it promptly introduced a series of draft resolutions calling for a ceasefire in GS, an end to the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, the full, rapid, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to GS, and the release of hostages.[389] These initiatives, however, were blocked by a veto from the US.[390] Nonetheless, Algeria continued to table further draft resolutions aimed at ending the war and ultimately succeeded in securing the adoption of one resolution after the US abstained.[391]

Although Palestinian resistance factions called on Algeria to reject the US-sponsored draft resolution on GS presented to the UNSC on 17/11/2025,[392]

Algeria ultimately voted in favor.[393] In justifying this position, Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf argued that the resolution formalizes the ceasefire agreement, ensures international protection for the Palestinian people, enables unrestricted humanitarian assistance, and lays the groundwork for reconstruction in GS. He further maintained that it rejects forced displacement and Israeli plans to annex GS, and that it has the endorsement of the PA as well as Arab and Muslim countries.[394]

In contrast to its proactive engagement within the UNSC, Algeria's role at the LAS level declined noticeably. This was evident in President 'Abdelmadjid Tebboune's absence from the Arab summits convened to address the Israeli war on GS. Algeria was instead represented by the Prime Minister at the Riyadh Summit in November 2023 and by the Foreign Minister at the Bahrain Summit; by the Baghdad Summit, representation had been reduced further to Algeria's LAS delegate and its ambassador in Cairo.[395] This downgrading was justified by claims that summit decisions had become concentrated in the hands of a limited group of Arab countries; Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Egypt and Jordan.[396] It also reflected the rejection by several Arab countries of Algeria's calls for concrete and firm measures against Israel, including expelling Israeli ambassadors from Arab states that maintain relations with Israel and imposing punitive economic measures.[397]

Despite the continuation of Algerian humanitarian support to GS and extensive popular fundraising campaigns, as well as sustained media and political expressions of support for Palestine, the authorities nonetheless refused to authorize large-scale demonstrations in the capital, Algiers, in solidarity with Palestine,[398] and restricted mass mobilization. This is particularly notable given that the Algerian public was among the most responsive to Operation al-Aqsa Flood and to Palestine, within the constraints it faced.

Position Toward Israel

Algeria and South Africa have undertaken sustained diplomatic efforts to revoke Israel's observer status in the African Union. Notably, these efforts resulted in preventing an Israeli delegation from entering the conference hall during the 44th Executive Council meeting of the African Union.[399] Furthermore, the Algerian delegation succeeded in securing the removal of Israel's former foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, from the proceedings of the 10th edition of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) forum, held in Cascais, Portugal.[400] In parallel, a bloc of 60 members of the Algerian parliament introduced a bill proposing a ban on any

normalization or commercial and economic engagement between Algerian public and private companies and foreign firms that finance Israel.[401]

In 2025, Algeria witnessed significant domestic debate over normalization with Israel, sparked by two key incidents. The first occurred on 3/2/2025, when President 'Abdelmadjid Tebboune told the French newspaper *L'Opinion* that "normalization will take place 'the very day there is a Palestinian state.'"[402] This statement generated controversy, with opposition parties, particularly the Movement of Society for Peace, Algeria's largest Islamic opposition party, viewing it as a departure from previous positions. While consistent with broader Arab positions and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, the statement represented a shift in Algerian diplomacy from outright rejection of normalization to conditional acceptance.[403]

The second incident involved Algerian MP Abdelouahab Yagoubi of the Movement of Society for Peace, who sat at the same table as an individual considered a representative of Israel during a meeting on the margins of the UNGA in New York. The party quickly disavowed his action, stressing that it "contradicts the firm positions of the Algerian state and the party regarding the central issue." MP Yagoubi, however, reaffirmed his principled opposition to normalization, noting that the meeting included no official Israeli representation and that the individual in question attended solely as a representative of the Druze community.[404]

9. Morocco

a. Development of Political Relations and Diplomatic Activities

Morocco maintained its established policy toward the Palestine issue following its normalization with Israel, reaffirming support for a two-state solution, an end to the war on GS, and adherence to the standard LAS framework.

It continued providing humanitarian aid to GS, delivering 295 tons,[405] primarily through the Bayt Mal al-Quds Asharif Agency, which implemented a prosthetics program for 23 children with amputations and supported the education sector.[406] Morocco also leveraged its ties with Israel to ensure rapid, direct delivery[407] via Ben Gurion Airport,[408] while simultaneously restricting demonstrations in solidarity with GS.[409]

Furthermore, on 19/1/2026, the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that King Mohammed VI had accepted an invitation from President Donald Trump to join, as a founding member, the BoP led by the US.[410]

b. Relations with Israel

Morocco and Sudan joined the Abraham Accords in 2020. Six other Arab African states, Algeria, the Comoros, Djibouti, Libya, Somalia, and Tunisia—have never recognized Israel, while Mauritania has suspended bilateral relations. Since the outbreak of Israel's genocidal campaign in GS and throughout the 2024–2025 war, Moroccan-Israeli ties have steadily strengthened. Military shipments to Israel through Moroccan ports, particularly via Maersk, continued uninterrupted.[411] Israel also participated in the African Lion military exercise in Morocco,[412] and the Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) signed a $1 billion contract to supply one next-generation Ofek-13 spy satellite to Morocco.[413]

Israeli reports further indicate a notable increase in Morocco's imports from Israel between 2023 and 2025, rising from about $63 million to around $116 million.[414] Furthermore, Israel appointed its first economic attaché to its office in Rabat.[415] Academically, a delegation of Moroccan "young leaders, influencers, professionals, academics and civil society activists visited Israel last week as a part of Sharaka's flagship program to promote tolerance through Holocaust education in the Arab and Muslim world,"[416] and some universities allowed Israeli citizens to enroll in master's programs.[417] Nevertheless, a broad popular current in Morocco continues to oppose normalization and expresses solidarity with the Palestinian resistance.

The formal development of relations between Morocco and Israel, not with standing the war in GS, may be attributed to several interrelated factors. Chief among these is Morocco's objective of securing US recognition of its sovereignty over Western Sahara, a recognition granted by President Donald Trump in December 2020 in exchange for Rabat's normalization of relations with Israel, which likewise acknowledged Morocco's sovereignty over the territory. Furthermore, Morocco has viewed its relationship with Israel as a means of weakening the Polisario Front by countering Iranian influence, particularly Tehran's support for the movement. At the same time, Rabat seeks to consolidate a strategic military balance with Algeria, which continues to back the Polisario Front.[418]

10. Libya

Libya remains mired in political division, with the Presidential Council exercising authority in Tripoli, while Khalifa Haftar controls eastern Libya from Benghazi.

In May 2024, the Presidential Council announced Libya's accession to South Africa's genocide case against Israel before the ICJ concerning its ongoing war on GS.[419] Libya thus became the only Arab state to take this step.

Meanwhile, Libya's Grand Mufti, Sadiq al-Ghariani, maintained that Israeli occupation can only be countered through resistance. He called for support for the Palestinian people and their resistance, urged postponing certain religious practices such as repeated '*Umrah*, and argued that funds spent on performing '*Umrah* more than once would be better directed to the people of GS and support for Palestinian resistance. He also criticized patronage of foreign restaurant chains that support Israel, asserting that such spending contributes to the killing and starvation of the population in GS.[420] By March 2024, Libyan assistance to GS had reached 1,330.5 tons.[421]

Conversely, forces affiliated with Khalifa Haftar prevented the Maghreb Sumud Convoy, intended to break the siege on GS, from transiting through Libya to Egypt, citing the participants' lack of Egyptian official approval.[422]

Several media reports further alleged that Libya had been identified as a potential destination under a plan attributed to Donald Trump to receive Palestinians displaced from GS.[423] According to Libyan sources, in exchange for resettlement, the US administration reportedly pledged to the government of 'Abdul Hamid Dbeibah the release of some $30 billion that the US froze for more than a decade.[424] It was also suggested that Khalifa Haftar would be granted "greater freedom to manage oil resources and leverage power."[425] These reports were met with categorical denials from Libyan authorities. Rejections were issued by the Libyan House of Representatives,[426] by Dbeibah as head of the Government of National Unity,[427] by the government of Usama Hammad appointed by the House of Representatives,[428] as well as by the US Embassy in Tripoli.[429]

With respect to relations with Israel, the period 2024–2025 saw renewed controversy over contacts between Israel and Libya, prompted by two principal developments. First, former Libyan Foreign Minister Najla al-Mangoush, who had served in the Government of National Unity led by 'Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, publicly commented, more than a year after her dismissal in 2023, on her meeting in Rome with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen. She stated that the meeting had been authorized by Dbeibah to discuss "strategic issues related to the security

and stability of the Mediterranean."[430] These remarks triggered protests in several Libyan cities, with demonstrators denouncing any move toward normalization with Israel. Subsequently, the chairman of the High Council of State (HCS), Khaled al-Mishri, called on the Public Prosecutor to initiate legal proceedings against Dbeibah, al-Mangoush, and all those involved in arranging the meeting with Cohen.[431]

Second, Mahmud al-Misrati, a journalist aligned with Khalifa Haftar, disclosed that he had personally attended meetings between Haftar's son, Saddam Haftar, and the Mossad. According to his account, the discussions centered on securing support to facilitate Saddam Haftar's rise to power in Libya in exchange for his father's withdrawal, an arrangement he claimed was ultimately rejected. This testimony echoed earlier reporting by the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* in 2021, which had revealed that Saddam Haftar had visited Tel Aviv to explore formal normalization in return for "military and political assistance."[432]

11. Tunisia, Sudan and Other States

Tunisia endorsed the LAS resolutions concerning the Palestine issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict, except for references to the "4 June 1967 borders," the "two-state solution," and "East Jerusalem." This position is grounded in Tunisia's longstanding and consistent support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to recover their legitimate and inalienable rights, foremost among them the establishment of an independent state over the entirety of the land of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital.[433] In his oath-taking address at Bardo Palace in October 2024, President Kais Saied stated that "the term normalization with the criminal Zionist entity does not exist in our vocabulary," adding that engaging with Israel constitutes high treason against the Palestinian right.[434] In parallel, MP Basma Hammami disclosed that parliament was preparing draft legislation to criminalize normalization with Israel.[435]

Moreover, in an effort to help break the blockade on GS, Sidi Bou Said Port hosted the Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF). Two vessels were reportedly struck by Israeli drones.[436] Tunisian aid delivered to GS up to July 2024 was estimated at approximately 1,600 tons.[437]

As for Sudan, although its relations with Israel were normalized in 2020, they did not progress in 2024–2025 as Israel had hoped. This stagnation can

be attributed both to the intensifying conflict between General 'Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces, and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti), leader of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and to the Israeli war in GS. In this context, Sudan's Minister of Information promptly denied reports that "the Sudanese government has sent any envoy to Israel." The statement followed a claim by the Sudanese outlet al-Rakoba that Lieutenant General Al-Sadiq Ismail, personal envoy to al-Burhan in his capacity as head of the Transitional Sovereign Council, had secretly visited Israel "to coordinate with Israeli officials on presenting Burhan in a favourable light to the new US administration and to address rising tensions with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over Burhan and the Sudanese army."[438]

Meanwhile, Sudanese criticism of Israel intensified in response to what was widely characterized domestically as a genocidal war in GS. Khartoum reaffirmed its rejection of any displacement of Palestinians. The Sudanese Foreign Minister dismissed reports regarding the resettlement of residents of GS in Sudanese territory and denied that any communications had taken place on this matter. Furthermore, the Associated Press reported that President Donald Trump's administration had initiated contacts with Khartoum concerning the possible acceptance of Palestinians, allegedly offering military assistance to support the Sudanese army against the RSF, alongside reconstruction aid and other incentives.[439]

Israel appears to favor the leader of Sudan's RSF, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti), in his confrontation with 'Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. In this context, *The Jerusalem Post* published a report characterizing al-Burhan as "a live threat" to Israel, asserting that he "is an enabler of radical Islam, an ally of Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, and most dangerously, a willing tool of Iran's expanding influence across Africa and the Middle East" through military and intelligence cooperation. The newspaper further called on the US to treat al-Burhan as an Iranian "proxy" and to impose economic sanctions.[440]

Nevertheless, Israel seeks to maintain control over the evolving dynamics in Sudan, clearly aiming to preserve influence with both sides of the conflict, al-Burhan and Hemedti. To this end, Tel Aviv has adopted a differentiated approach among its sovereign institutions: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs manages official communications with al-Burhan's camp, recognized as the legitimate representative of the Sudanese state, while Mossad oversees unofficial,

field-level contacts with Hemedti's team, including information exchanges and secret meetings reported by various media outlets over recent years. In general, Israel's objectives in Sudan are multifaceted. They include expanding normalization agreements and positioning Sudan as a key component of the Abraham Accords, given its historically firm stance of "no peace, no recognition and no negotiations" with Israel; safeguarding security and intelligence interests by preventing armed groups from exploiting instability, which could facilitate arms smuggling and support for resistance factions, thereby undermining Israel's security and increasing logistical and operational pressures; and advancing broader geopolitical aims, such as weakening Sudan and preventing its emergence as a strong, unified state, while using Sudan and control of the Nile waters as instruments to constrain and shape Egyptian political decision-making. Sudan's strategic location on the Red Sea, near the Horn of Africa, further underscores its pivotal importance in both the Middle Eastern and African spheres.[441]

The years 2024–2025 saw renewed US efforts to restore the severed relations between Mauritania and Israel, which had been suspended since 2008. The US outlet Semafor reported, citing an informed source, that the "Islamic Republic of Mauritania is set to take a step toward resuming ties with the state of Israel at a White House meeting brokered by US President Donald Trump," on 9/7/2025. According to the report, Mauritania President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani was to "meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the sidelines of a mini US-Africa summit featuring four other western African countries: Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Senegal."[442] There is no evidence that such a meeting took place, and Nouakchott has officially denied these reports.[443] However, it remains plausible that Mauritania, along with other Arab states that have yet to normalize relations with Israel, may eventually move in that direction, particularly given the political and economic incentives extended by the US. Many of these states face structural constraints that limit their capacity to withstand US pressure. Concurrently, support for the Palestine issue has receded among several Arab regimes, for whom it no longer constitutes a central priority. Nevertheless, mindful of domestic opposition to normalization, these regimes often prefer to maintain discreet relations with Israel.[444]

In a related development, on 26/12/2025, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced Israel's "official recognition of the Republic of Somaliland as an independent and sovereign state," thereby making Israel the first country to

officially recognize the secessionist Somali region. The Prime Minister's Office stated that the declaration was jointly signed by Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar, and Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi. The move was framed as "in the spirit of the Abraham Accords, signed at the initiative of President Trump." Moreover, Netanyahu's office indicated that Israel would "immediately expand its relations with the Republic of Somaliland through extensive cooperation in the fields of agriculture, health, technology, and economy." In parallel, Sa'ar confirmed that he had spoken with the Somaliland president to formalize "mutual recognition and the establishment of full diplomatic relations, which will include the appointment of ambassadors and the opening of embassies." For its part, the Government of Somaliland welcomed the recognition as a significant step toward strengthening its international legitimacy. In an official statement, it emphasized that the decision would facilitate the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel and reiterated its intention to join the Abraham Accords.[445]

In an interview with Al Jazeera, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud stated that, "according to Somali intelligence, Somaliland has accepted three Israeli conditions in exchange for Israeli recognition: the resettlement of Palestinians, the establishment of an Israeli military base on the coast of the Gulf of Aden, and Somaliland joining the Abraham Accords."[446]

Israeli Channel 12 has indicated that the US has considered Puntland, Somaliland and Morocco "for the absorption of refugee Gazans after President Donald Trump announced that the US plans to take over the Gaza Strip and relocate" the Gazans. The report noted that these countries are in "strong need for US support, as Somaliland and Puntland seek international recognition" of their sovereignty over Somali territories.[447]

In the same vein, Middle East Monitor reported that "the UAE is mediating on Israel's behalf for the establishment of a military base in Somaliland," to counter the Ansar Allah (Houthi) movement and Iran, in exchange for Israeli recognition of Somaliland as an independent state.[448] Similarly, an article in *The Jerusalem Post* stated that "the Somaliland recognition struck directly at Türkiye's sphere of influence," given Ankara's entrenched role in Somalia, where it "trains Somali forces, builds infrastructure." The article situates this development within a broader pattern that includes cooperation with Cyprus and Greece, as well as Israeli support

for the Kurds and the Druze in Syria, thereby delineating an expanding sphere of strategic rivalry between Tel Aviv and Ankara extending from the Mediterranean to Syria and the Horn of Africa. Moreover, Israel's recognition of Somaliland cannot be divorced from its so-called "Periphery Doctrine," a strategy designed to cultivate alliances with non-Arab states and minority groups in the Middle East, alongside geographically distant Arab states, with the aim of mitigating the regional isolation imposed on Israel in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict.[449]

For his part, Djibouti's Foreign Minister, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, stated in January 2024 that "we did not condemn the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab, as we consider them legitimate relief for the Palestinians." This position signaled a comparatively advanced stance in support of the resistance and diverged from the prevailing orientation within the Arab normalization environment with Israel. Furthermore, with regard to the US-led international coalition formed to confront the Houthis, Youssouf affirmed that Djibouti had refrained from joining the Red Sea force established by Washington.[450] In the same vein, Prime Minister Abdoulkader Kamil Mohamed disclosed that his government had rejected a US request to deploy a missile platform on its territory to target the Houthis in Yemen.[451]

On 2/12/2025, the UNGA adopted a resolution calling for an end to Israel's occupation of Palestine. Sponsored by Djibouti, Jordan, Mauritania, Qatar, Senegal, and Palestine, the resolution reaffirmed the UN's responsibility toward the Palestine issue, urged the termination of Israel's occupation of the 1967 territories, and reaffirmed support for a two-state solution.[452]

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Trade relations between Israel and the Arab states that have normalized ties with it remained largely unaffected by Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Furthermore, these states did not adopt any meaningful measures or sanctions against Israel in response to its war on GS. More specifically, Israel's trade with Egypt, Jordan and Morocco exhibited a general upward trend over the period 2023–2025. Bahrain constituted a partial exception, as its exports to Israel rose sharply in 2024 before returning to prior levels. Meanwhile, the UAE accounted for about 70.4% of total Arab trade with Israel in 2025, a share it had largely maintained throughout 2023–2024.

According to the Israeli CBS, Israeli exports to Egypt increased from about $259 million in 2023 to $305 million in 2024, before falling to $203 million in 2025. In contrast, Israeli imports from Egypt grew steadily over the same period, rising from about $183 million in 2023 to $274 million in 2024 and reaching $358 million in 2025.

In the case of Jordan, Israeli exports declined to about $97 million in 2025, down from $108 million in 2024, though remaining above the $76 million recorded in 2023. In contrast, Israeli imports from Jordan increased significantly, reaching $541 million in 2025, compared to $369 million in 2024 and $372 million in 2023.

Regarding Morocco, Israeli exports rose to about $116 million in 2025, up from $95 million in 2024 and $63 million in 2023. Conversely, Israeli imports from Morocco declined to about $13 million in 2025, compared to $14 million in 2024 and $16 million in 2023.

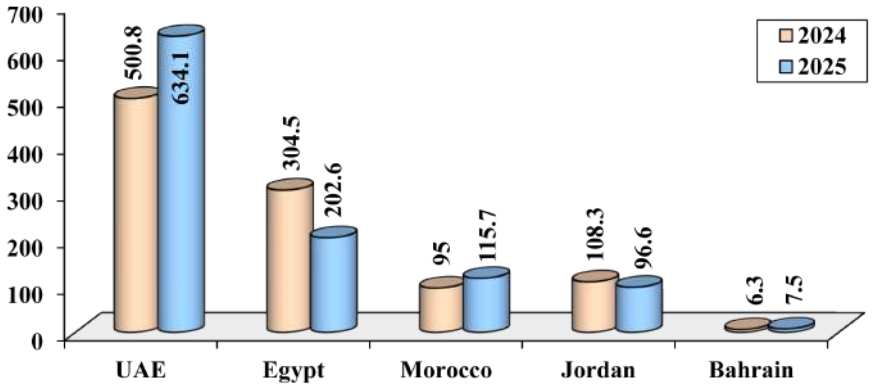
As for Bahrain, Israeli exports rose to about $8 million in 2025, up from $6 million in 2024 and around $3 million in 2023. By contrast, Israeli imports from Bahrain declined markedly to about $14 million in 2025, down from roughly $102 million in 2024, having previously stood at about $8 million in 2023.

The table below outlines Israel's trade relations with Arab countries.

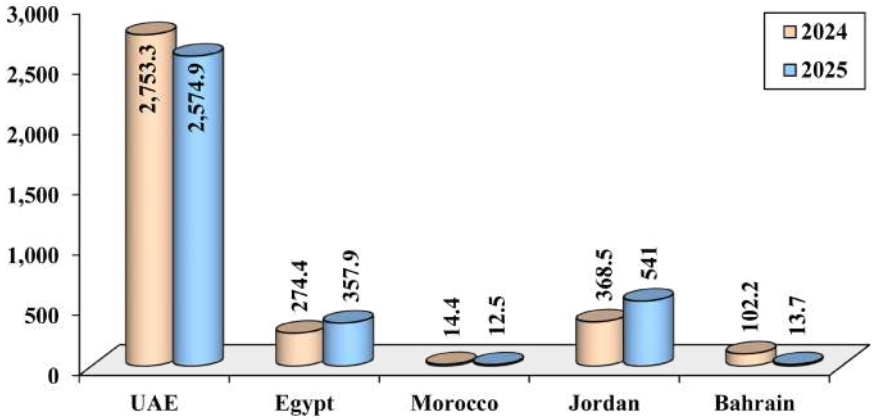
Table 1/6: Israeli Exports and Imports with Arab Countries 2023–2025 ($ million)[453]

Country	Israeli exports			Israeli imports		
	2025	2024	2023	2025	2024	2023
Egypt	202.6	304.5	258.5	357.9	274.4	182.7
Jordan	96.6	108.3	76	541	368.5	371.8
Morocco	115.7	95	62.5	12.5	14.4	16.2
UAE	634.1	500.8	626.6	2,574.9	2,753.3	2,316.3
Bahrain	7.5	6.3	3.4	13.7	102.2	8.1

Israeli Exports to Arab Countries 2024–2025 ($ million)



Israeli Imports From Arab Countries 2024–2025 ($ million)



Third: The Popular Arab Position and Its Orientations

During 2024–2025, the popular Arab reaction to Israel's war on GS manifested in multiple forms:

1. Demonstrations and Protest Rallies

Morocco led Arab countries in organizing solidarity actions, recording 10,480 protests and rallies, ranging from sit-ins to marches, between October 2023 and September 2025, according to the Moroccan Commission for Supporting the Ummah's Causes, a non-governmental organization.[454] Demonstrations organized by the "Moroccan Front for Supporting Palestine and Opposing Normalization,"

which includes several political groups, notably the opposition Justice and Spirituality Movement, condemned Israel's ongoing attacks, the continued starvation of Palestinians in GS, and the closure of crossings.[455] Much of this solidarity focused on anti-normalization efforts. Protests in Marrakech sought to prevent Israeli Transport Minister Miri Regev from participating in the "Fourth Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety" in February 2025.[456] Additional demonstrations took place at the ports of Casablanca and Tangier to block Maersk ships accused of transporting weapons and military equipment to Israel.[457]

In Tunisia, demonstrations focused on the US Embassy in Tunis, totaling 91 sit-ins by September 2025, calling for an end to the massacres of civilians in GS. Protesters voiced opposition to US President Donald Trump and expressed solidarity with GS and the Palestinian resistance.[458] Concurrently, the Coordination of Joint Action for Palestine, the Tunisian Campaign Against Normalization, and other advocates of the Palestine issue in Tunisia have sought to collect one million signatures to enact a law criminalizing normalization with Israel.[459]

Libya witnessed numerous demonstrations and public vigils in solidarity with the resistance, GS and the broader Palestine issue. In particular, following statements by Najla al-Mangoush, the dismissed foreign minister of the Government of National Unity headed by 'Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, regarding her meeting in Rome in August 2023 with former Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, protests erupted in Tripoli, Misrata and Tajoura. Al-Mangoush indicated that the meeting had been arranged by the government in Tripoli, a disclosure that triggered widespread public anger. Consequently, demonstrators denounced normalization with Israel and called for an investigation into Prime Minister 'Abdul Hamid Dbeibah and other officials involved in the meeting. In Misrata, protesters escalated their demands, calling for the resignation of the government as a whole.[460] Furthermore, in response to global mobilization against the policy of starving GS, Libyans organized a protest in Algeria Square in central Tripoli. Participants raised banners demanding an end to the aggression and the opening of border crossings. The event was convened by several Libyan initiatives, including Jerusalem Is My Trust – Libya and the Alliance for Resisting Normalization, in addition to student and youth organizations.[461]

In Mauritania, numerous demonstrations and solidarity events were organized in support of the resistance and the Palestine issue. In Nouakchott, citizens took to the streets to demand an end to the genocide that Israel continues to perpetrate in

GS. These mobilizations followed calls by the "Student Initiative Against Zionist Penetration and in Defense of Just Causes." Participants, moreover, criticized "the absence of an official Arab response commensurate with the scale of the catastrophe in Gaza."[462] In addition, several protest vigils were staged in front of the US embassy in Nouakchott, drawing large crowds and calling for the "expulsion of embassies supporting the occupation from Mauritanian territory."[463]

In Jordan, mass demonstrations following Friday prayers persisted for nearly a year and a half across most cities and towns of the Kingdom, representing one of the most sustained and visible manifestations of popular engagement with Operation al-Aqsa Flood, support for the resistance, and solidarity with the Palestinian people. Over this period, thousands of protests and public events were organized. This mobilization largely responded to calls issued by the National Forum for Supporting the Resistance and Protecting the Homeland, a broad-based popular coalition comprising dozens of opposition political figures and approximately seven political parties, most notably the IAF, which represents the MB Movement. Demonstrators voiced support for the resistance and its leadership, while emphasizing the unity of destiny between Jordan and Palestine and framing support for GS as a national, pan-Arab, and humanitarian duty.[464] At the same time, protesters called for the complete severance of relations between Jordan and Israel, including the abrogation of the Wadi Araba Peace Treaty in 1994, as well as the suspension of trade exchanges, goods and agricultural imports.[465] The vicinity of the Israeli embassy in the Rabiya area of Amman became a focal point for repeated protests condemning the aggression against GS. On several occasions, demonstrators attempted to storm the embassy compound; however, security forces intervened, arresting dozens and leading to clashes between protesters and security personnel.[466]

In Syria, following the fall of al-Assad regime, public squares in most cities saw frequent demonstrations throughout the war. Participants carried Palestinian flags and images of martyrs killed by Israeli strikes on GS, denouncing Israel's crimes and urging the international community to act swiftly to end the genocidal assault on Palestinians and lift the siege of GS. Protesters across governorates stressed the importance of unified Arab and Islamic support to bolster Palestinian steadfastness against ongoing Israeli aggression, and called for Israeli leaders to be held accountable in international courts for the crimes committed in GS over the past two years.[467]

In Lebanon, both Lebanese and Palestinian communities across cities, towns and RCs, from north to south, engaged in sustained demonstrations, sit-ins, and protest vigils throughout the war. Participants displayed Palestinian and Lebanese flags, banners of resistance movements, and slogans condemning the aggression, while demanding Israel's accountability and an end to attacks on innocent civilians.[468] These protests, including widespread strikes and sit-ins, closely followed developments in GS.

The Yemeni population engaged with the GS war with notable vigor and organization, staging numerous mass rallies in Sanaa in solidarity with the Palestinian people and in support of the resistance. Hundreds of demonstrations occurred across Yemeni cities, both in areas controlled by Ansar Allah "Houthis" and under the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council. In a notable instance, demonstrations called by the Ansar Allah leader, 'Abdul Malik al-Houthi, took place at al-Sab'een Square in the capital and spread to 800 squares designated by the Committee for Supporting Operation al-Aqsa Flood, with the largest concentrations in Hudaydah (179 squares) and Ibb (162 squares). The rallies, held under the slogan "We Stand Firm with Gaza and Palestine… Against Killers and Arrogant Powers," featured protesters waving Yemeni and Palestinian flags and displaying banners affirming unwavering solidarity with Gaza, while chanting slogans denouncing Israel and the US for its support of Tel Aviv.[469]

Throughout the two years of the war, numerous demonstrations and mass events (too many to enumerate fully in this report) took place across Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Iraq, Sudan and Somalia,… reflecting widespread Arab solidarity with Palestine and its resistance. While some Arab states, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, implemented measures to restrict popular protests, these controls did not mask the prevailing public sentiment, which remained strongly sympathetic to the Palestinian people and opposed to Israel, as confirmed by opinion polls.

An Arab public opinion survey on the Israeli war on GS, released by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies on 10/1/2024, was conducted on a sample of 8 thousand respondents (men and women) from 16 Arab countries, including Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and the WB, Palestine

(including Jerusalem). The surveyed communities represent 95% of the population of the Arab region and its far-flung regions. The findings indicate that 67% of respondents reported that the military operation carried out by Hamas was a "legitimate resistance operation," 19% reported that it was a "somewhat flawed but legitimate resistance operation," and only 5% considered it "an illegitimate operation." There was overwhelming Arab solidarity with the Palestinian people, with 92% expressing support: 69% expressing their solidarity with Palestinians and support for Hamas, 23% expressing solidarity with Palestinians despite opposing Hamas, and 1% expressing a lack of solidarity with the Palestinians. A consensus of 92% believe that the "Palestinian question concerns all Arabs and not just the Palestinians," an unprecedented increase from 76% at the end of 2022. Opposition to recognizing Israel was similarly strong, with 89% against and only 4% in favor, up from 84% in 2022. Regarding the measures Arab governments might take to halt the war, 36% stated that Arab governments should suspend all relations or normalization processes with Israel, while 14% stated that aid and support should be brought into Gaza without Israeli approval, and 11% said that the Arab governments should use oil as a weapon to assert pressure on Israel and its supporters. Meanwhile 9% believed that Arab countries should establish a global coalition to boycott Israel.[470]

2. Boycotting Companies Supporting Israel

Since the onset of the ongoing war in GS on 7/10/2023, several major global corporations openly backed Israel's military in its campaign against Palestinians, sparking widespread Arab and international outrage. This backlash materialized in extensive boycott campaigns that inflicted unprecedented losses. In many Arab countries, McDonald's sales declined by 50–90% within a month, and the company lost $7 billion in market value after its Chief Financial Officer (CFO) acknowledged the boycott's impact on Middle East sales in Q1 2024. Similarly, Starbucks reported Q2 losses in 2024, as declining revenues and profits led to a 16% drop in its share price.[471] Concurrently, Majid Al-Futtaim Group, the Arab-region franchisee of the French retailer Carrefour, shuttered stores in Jordan, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain.[472]

The boycott extended beyond corporations to encompass Western universities implicated in supporting Israel. The Gulf Coalition Against Normalisation (Gulf CAN) launched a campaign targeting British universities involved

in backing Israeli crimes. In an official statement, the coalition stressed that the campaign targets universities that "are not only complicit in refusing to acknowledge the genocide in Gaza, but also play a direct role in financing and developing weapons supplied to the Zionist occupation army," and it also targets those complicit in "suppressing demonstrations by students demanding an end to their participation in the genocide in Gaza." The statement highlighted the pivotal role Gulf students could play, noting that Gulf "scholarship programmes and partnerships with local universities in the Gulf are an 'indispensable source of income for British universities.'" Founded in 2019, Gulf CAN is the united front of the people of the Arab Gulf that coordinates action against the Zionist project in the region. It "is composed of numerous regional organisations and working groups across the Gulf, including: BDS Kuwait, Bahrain Society Against Normalisation with the Zionist Entity, Qatar Youth Opposed Normalisation (QAYON), Youth for Quds (the Gulf Committee), amongst others."[473]

3. Convoys Breaking the Siege of GS

The GSF mobilized participants from 44 countries, totaling over a thousand activists, nearly 800 of whom belonged to the Maghreb Sumud Flotilla. GSF included individuals from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania,[474] while additional participants came from Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman,[475] and Jordan.[476] Of the 50 vessels comprising the fleet, 23 were Maghrebian.[477] Concurrently, the Maghreb Sumud Convoy, departing from Tunisia with approximately two thousand activists traveling in around 20 buses and 350 cars, sought to reach the Rafah crossing to enter GS.[478] Its progress was, however, obstructed by authorities in eastern Libya, who barred its passage toward the Musaid border crossing with Egypt.[479] Moreover, on 14/6/2025, the "Karama" solidarity convoy departed from Lebanon toward the Rafah crossing; however, it was compelled to turn back at the Lebanese-Syrian border, as Lebanese General Security denied its departure in the absence of formal authorization from the Syrian authorities.[480]

4. Pursuing Israeli Officials

The Union of Arab Jurists announced the formation of an Arab legal task force to pursue those responsible for war crimes arising from the Israeli aggression against GS and to advocate on behalf of victims of acts of genocide committed

against the Palestinian people.[481] According to Moroccan lawyer Khalid Sefiani, coordinator of the "Arab Legal Task Force for Prosecuting Israeli War Criminals," the group is preparing to file complaints before the ICC against Israeli officials, while also initiating proceedings in Arab jurisdictions where domestic legislation permits. Sefiani further indicated that Moroccan participants in GSF may seek legal recourse before Moroccan courts following their arrest and alleged torture by the Israeli army during efforts to break the naval blockade on GS. Importantly, he emphasized that the initiative extends beyond targeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or senior officials; rather, it encompasses all individuals implicated in crimes against Palestinians, including those who provided political, military, or diplomatic support, such as the US.[482]

In a related context, dozens of Arab journalists, media professionals and activists announced their endorsement of a "Code of Honor for the Defense of Palestine and Gaza." The signatories committed to deploying their professional expertise to counter the Israeli narrative and document ongoing violations against Palestinians. They further maintained that the struggle over narrative is no less significant than other arenas of confrontation, underscoring that independent media serves as a critical instrument in shaping public consciousness in the confrontation with Israel.[483]

5. Popular Donations

Arab societies demonstrated sustained financial solidarity with GS, whether through individual giving or organized campaigns. This pattern was evident across markedly different economic contexts. In Saudi Arabia, for example, total donations (by February 2026) exceeded 745 million riyals (more than $199 million).[484] Conversely, in a less affluent country such as Mauritania, significant public mobilization led to contributions estimated (by June 2024) at nearly $10 million, about 4 billion Mauritanian ouguiyas.[485]

6. Emotional Solidarity

It was manifested, for example, in the performance by tens of millions of the absentee funeral prayer (*Salat al-Gha'ib*) for the Head of the Hamas Political Bureau, Isma'il Haniyyah, in several Arab countries, including Yemen, Lebanon and Jordan, concurrent with the funeral prayer and burial held in Doha, Qatar.[486] Similar prayers were also held for Al-Qassam Brigades leaders: Muhammad Sinwar, Chief of General Staff; Muhammad Shabanah, the Rafah Brigade

Commander; Ḥakam al-‘Isa, Head of the Weapons and Combat Services Division; Rȧid Sa‘d, Head of Military Manufacturing; and Abu ‘Ubaida (Huthaifah al-Kahlut), former spokesperson of the Al-Qassam Brigades. These ceremonies took place in Morocco, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen.[487] This emotional solidarity was further reflected in official obituaries issued by the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq (AMSI)[488] and the Syrian Islamic Council[489] for the Head of Hamas’s Political Bureau, Yaḥya Sinwar, who was killed during a battle with Israel’s army in Rafah, in the southern part of GS. Likewise, the Jordanian football clubs al-Faisaly and al-Wehdat, the country’s two leading teams, publicly mourned Abu ‘Ubaida (Huthaifah al-Kahlut).[490]

An examination of Arab popular engagement with the Palestine issue during 2024–2025 suggests that, despite its wide geographic spread, this popular mobilization remained largely symbolic in its overall impact. More specifically, it failed to sustain consistent momentum over time or to maintain regular weekly or monthly demonstrations in parallel with the duration of the war. Furthermore, it did not generate any substantive shift in Arab governmental positions. Instead, state policies continued to be driven by their own strategic calculations, with little discernible responsiveness to public sentiment or evolving street-level mobilization.[491] By contrast, academic and student activism across the Arab world remained minimal and, in many cases, virtually absent, while Western universities witnessed a pronounced surge in engagement.[492]

The relative weakness of Arab mobilization may be attributed primarily to the extensive use by Arab regimes of security and legal mechanisms, such as arrests and restrictive protest laws, to contain independent popular activism, even when it relates to the Palestine issue, where the enduring specter of the Arab Spring continues to shape the calculations of Arab leaderships. At the same time, wider social and cultural shifts, most notably the rise of individualism and deep immersion in digital spaces, have reduced the capacity of societies to translate emotional solidarity into sustained collective action. The Maghreb Sumud Convoy, which departed from Tunisia, passed through Algeria and Libya, and reached the Egyptian border in August 2025, illustrates these limitations. Despite its attempt to transform symbolic support into concrete engagement, the convoy was halted by security restrictions at the crossing, its participants were returned to their home countries, and it failed to generate significant grassroots engagement within Egypt. In addition, psychological and social factors, such as chronic frustration

with political action, preoccupation with daily economic pressures, and fear of punishment, have further reinforced public silence or, at best, limited direct forms of engagement.[493]

Conclusion

The Arab position during 2024–2025 remained characterized by weakness and limited effectiveness vis-à-vis the Palestine issue. However, Israel's genocidal war against GS during this period, met by sustained resistance and notable societal resilience, brought into sharper focus a critical dimension of this stance: an unprecedented level of official abandonment in the history of the conflict with the Zionist project. More specifically, certain Arab regimes were not merely passive but actively complicit. They contributed to the siege imposed on the resistance, sought to delegitimize it, curtailed popular mobilization in support of Palestine, and continued political and commercial engagement while facilitating supply channels for Israeli needs through their territories and borders.

Israeli policies of Judaization and annexation, coupled with displacement initiatives and the imposition of coercive living conditions in the WB and GS, have posed strategic risks not only to Palestine but also to the surrounding regional environment, particularly Egypt and Jordan. Accordingly, these regimes, supported by a broader Arab consensus, have adopted firm positions opposing displacement. Furthermore, the shift in Israeli security doctrine—from deterrence by threat to deterrence by destruction, including pre-emptive destruction, and toward reshaping the Arab and Muslim region in line with Israeli security standards rather than adapting Israel to its environment—has markedly intensified threats to regional national security. It has also heightened the risk of direct Israeli intervention in neighboring states' political systems and societal spheres, reflecting a broader "securitization of everyday life" aimed at regulating daily life according to Israeli security imperatives. Meanwhile, as Israel has continued its operations against Lebanon and Syria, its actions have extended to Yemen, Tunisia and Qatar. At the same time, and with US backing, it has exerted pressure on Arab regimes to adopt stringent measures against movements supportive of the resistance, seeking to constrain and politically and media-wise neutralize them, as well as to prevent fundraising for the GS and Palestine. These regimes have responded to such pressures to varying degrees.

The official Arab position has broadly maintained its traditional orientation toward the Palestine issue, centered on support for the peace process, the two-state solution and the leadership of the PLO and the PA. In this regard, Arab states have undertaken sustained diplomatic efforts to reactivate the peace process, most notably through a Saudi initiative, in coordination with France, to convene the New York conference aimed at advancing the implementation of the two-state solution. Nevertheless, the New York Declaration, endorsed by Arab states, condemned Hamas and called for its disarmament. It further outlined a framework conditioning Palestinian elections in the WB and GS on participation limited to actors committed to the Oslo Accords and the peace process, effectively excluding resistance factions that, according to all opinion polling, enjoy broader popular support than pro-Oslo forces. As a result, this approach risks exacerbating internal Palestinian fragmentation while also being perceived as accommodating Israeli preferences and reinforcing existing power asymmetries.

Egypt and Qatar have played a significant role in mediation efforts aimed at halting the offensive on GS, securing a prisoner-exchange agreement, enabling an Israeli withdrawal, facilitating humanitarian access, and advancing reconstruction. In parallel, the announcement by eight Arab and Muslim countries (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, the UAE, Türkiye, Pakistan and Indonesia) of their support for Trump's GS plan has contributed to placing the resistance in a difficult position. While the initial component of the plan refers to a ceasefire, prisoner exchanges and the entry of aid, its substantive core effectively establishes external US custodianship over GS, undermines Palestinian sovereignty over decision-making, and ties Israeli withdrawal, the cessation of attacks, and the opening of crossings to Israeli-defined conditions.

Normalization states have largely maintained their political relations with Israel, although some have recalled their ambassadors. Meanwhile, economic ties have continued, with particularly robust engagement observed in the UAE, Egypt, Jordan and Bahrain. By contrast, the normalization process with Saudi Arabia has stalled, as Riyadh has conditioned any further progress on Israel accepting a two-state solution.

At the same time, the preoccupation of several Arab states with domestic instability and internal conflicts has constrained their capacity to engage with the Palestine issue, as illustrated in the cases of Sudan, Libya, Syria and Somalia.

Arab public engagement with the Palestine issue has been extensive, particularly in the context of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, and has been most visible where space for expression exists. Numerous countries, including Jordan, Morocco, Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, Somalia, Kuwait, and Syria, witnessed thousands of demonstrations, alongside million-strong mobilizations, especially in Yemen. Furthermore, broad grassroots initiatives emerged to raise donations and to promote boycotts of Israeli and US goods, both in these countries and in Oman and Algeria. Nevertheless, during 2025, some governments moved to tighten restrictions on charitable activities and fundraising, notably in Kuwait and Jordan.

Looking ahead, Arab efforts are likely to concentrate on rehabilitating the PA to enable its return to governance in GS, primarily through sustained political and financial support, particularly from Gulf states.

In this context, Arab states, especially Qatar, Egypt and Jordan, are expected to press for the implementation of the Trump plan regarding a ceasefire in GS, while also accelerating the transition to the agreement's second phase. This phase would involve reconstruction and the reconfiguration of the political and security order in the Strip, without conditioning it on the disarmament of Hamas. While Arab governments do not object in principle to the disarmament of Hamas and other resistance factions, they are likely to pursue a mutually acceptable arrangement, alongside a recalibration of the International Stabilization Force (ISF) mandate, limiting it primarily to "peacekeeping" and ceasefire monitoring.

Furthermore, pressures are expected to intensify regarding the disarmament of Hizbullah in Lebanon, with Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon being increasingly linked to such an outcome. Nonetheless, the party is likely to reject disarmament, which in turn will prompt efforts to formulate an arrangement aimed at ensuring de-escalation, preserving Lebanese state sovereignty, and avoiding internal confrontation.

Meanwhile, the normalization process may encounter growing obstacles due to Israel's expanding ambition to assert regional dominance and impose its security paradigm, alongside its reluctance to make concessions on a two-state solution. This is further reinforced by ongoing displacement dynamics within the occupied territories. Against this backdrop, Arab states are likely to perceive heightened national security risks, leading to a more cautious and restrained approach toward advancing the peace process.

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Chapter Seven

The Palestine Issue and the Muslim World

The Palestine Issue and the Muslim World

Introduction

This chapter focuses on non-Arab Muslim countries. While these states hold varying positions on issues affecting the Muslim world, the Palestine issue remains the most widely consensual, despite differences in levels of sympathy, solidarity, support and relations with Israel. The chapter reviews the positions of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and presents two case studies; Türkiye and Iran. It also provides a brief overview of key stances in other countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan, in addition to examining popular engagement with the Palestine issue and the normalization process with Israel.

First: OIC

The strategic transformations experienced by the region during 2024–2025, together with the wide-ranging political, security, and economic challenges that accompanied them, did not result in any substantive change in the performance of the OIC. This was evident most notably in the organization's response to the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in the GS, which amounted to a war of extermination against its population and was accompanied by attempts at forced displacement. Nor did these developments prompt an elevation in the organization's engagement with strategic Islamic issues to a level commensurate with the aspirations of Muslim peoples. Consequently, throughout 2024–2025, the organization undertook no serious or effective measures to halt the genocide inflicted upon the Palestinian people. Its response remained largely confined to expressions of condemnation, denunciation, and censure concerning the killing of civilians and the extensive destruction that permeated all aspects of life in the GS.

In January 2024, the OIC welcomed the ICJ ruling endorsing the provisional measures sought by South Africa to avert further acts of genocide perpetrated by Israeli forces in the GS. Notably, these measures call for the immediate cessation of Israeli military operations in the GS. Moreover, the OIC urged all

States Parties to ensure Israel's full and prompt compliance with the Court's order, while emphasizing the obligation of the international community to assume its responsibilities in securing justice for the Palestinian people, affording them international protection, and bringing to an end the acts of genocide to which they continue to be subjected.[1]

While several States responded to Israeli demands by suspending funding for the UNRWA in an effort to curtail its operations and undermine its humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people amid Israel's genocidal war, the OIC expressed its regret over these States' decision to temporarily withhold the funds allocated to UNRWA. It further regarded this decision as constituting collective punishment, likely to exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in the GS.[2]

In March 2024, the OIC held an extraordinary meeting at the level of foreign ministers of its member states to address Israel's aggression against GS. The final communiqué called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in response to the comprehensive assault on the Palestinian people in GS, the provision of humanitarian, medical and relief aid, the restoration of water and electricity services, and the opening of unobstructed humanitarian corridors to deliver urgent assistance in adequate quantities. It further underscored its "categorical rejection of, and opposition by all means to, any attempt to displace, expel, or forcibly transfer the Palestinian people from their land," and urged the Prosecutor of the ICC to expedite investigations into the war crimes committed by the Israeli officials against the defenseless Palestinian population.[3]

In this context, the OIC condemned the genocide in GS and, in its concluding statement at the summit held in Banjul, the capital of Gambia, in May 2024, called on its member states to exert "diplomatic, political and legal pressure" and to impose sanctions at all levels, economic, sporting, cultural and international, against Israel. The OIC further called for an "immediate, permanent and unconditional ceasefire" and urged a halt to the export of weapons and ammunition used by Israel's military to perpetrate the genocide in GS. The statement also emphasized, "We call on our Palestinian brothers and sisters to uphold unity in their struggle to achieve their goals under the banner of the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."[4]

Strikingly, while the OIC was publicly condemning Israel's massacres in GS and urging the international community to fulfill its responsibility to halt the

extermination campaign, certain member states facilitated the establishment of a land corridor to supply Israel with goods after maritime transport via the Red Sea was disrupted, following Yemeni attacks on vessels bound for the Israeli port of Eilat. In December 2023, the UAE and Israel had signed a land bridge agreement, where "the new route will connect the UAE to Haifa through Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and will travel in both directions."[5]

In August 2024, the OIC held an extraordinary meeting at the level of foreign ministers to address Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people and Israel's violation of the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran through the assassination of Isma'il Haniyyah, head of Hamas's Political Bureau, in Tehran. During the opening session, OIC Secretary-General Hissein Brahim Taha strongly condemned the daily war crimes and acts of genocide committed by Israel against the Palestinian people in the GS and WB, including occupied Jerusalem. The final statement declared that "the assassination of Haniyyah constitutes an attack on Iran's sovereignty, territorial integrity and security… and represents an act of aggression and a blatant violation of international law."[6]

The OIC further urged all states to endorse the political initiative launched by Saudi Arabia through the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, emphasizing that it serves as a political safeguard for the realization of a two-state solution in accordance with international law, the UN Charter and its resolutions. The initiative reflects a firm commitment to supporting efforts to end Israel's occupation, establish the Palestinian state, and achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting "peace" in the region.[7]

At the outset of 2025, the OIC confronted a new challenge with the return of US President Donald Trump to the White House and the establishment of a right-wing administration fully aligned with Israel. In response, the OIC issued a strong condemnation of President Trump's call to forcibly displace the Palestinian population from GS. The OIC also reiterated its rejection of any schemes seeking to alter the geographic or legal status of the occupied Palestinian territories, underscoring that GS constitutes an inseparable part of the land of the occupied State of Palestine.[8]

Furthermore, to counter the threat of depopulating the GS, the OIC endorsed the Arab plan for the reconstruction of GS, explicitly ensuring that Palestinians would not be displaced. In its concluding statement, the ministerial meeting convened to

address Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people reaffirmed the "absolute rejection and resolute opposition to any plans aimed at displacing the Palestinian population, whether individually or collectively, within or beyond their land."

The statement also strongly condemned the policies of starvation and scorched-earth tactics designed to compel the Palestinian people to abandon their homeland. It welcomed efforts to establish a trust fund responsible for receiving financial pledges from all states and donor financing institutions, with the aim of implementing recovery and reconstruction projects. It also called for the establishment of an international fund, in cooperation with the UN, to support the orphans of GS, and emphasized strengthening the resilience and steadfastness of the Palestinian people on their land by providing enhanced humanitarian assistance and all possible facilitative measures.[9]

Amid Israel's continued failure to subdue the Palestinian resistance in the GS, and following its August 2025 declaration of intent to occupy the entire GS, the OIC, in coordination with the Arab Group at the UN, issued a press statement from UN headquarters condemning the Israeli decision. They expressed "their strong condemnation and categorical rejection of Israel's announcement of its intention to impose full military control over the Gaza Strip. We consider this announcement a dangerous and unacceptable escalation, a flagrant violation of international law, and an attempt to entrench the illegal occupation and impose a fait accompli/ facts on the ground by force, in contravention of international legitimacy."[10]

In response to Israel's continued escalation and its 9/9/2025 attempt to assassinate members of the Hamas negotiating delegation, the OIC convened the Joint Arab-Islamic Emergency Summit on 15/9/2025 in Doha, Qatar. At the summit, OIC Secretary-General Hissein Brahim Taha "expressed the Cooperation's full support for all measures taken by the State of Qatar to safeguard its sovereignty, security, and stability, and renewed his call on the international community, in particular the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), to shoulder its responsibilities to ensure that Israel is held accountable for all its crimes." He stressed that "the Israeli attack on the State of Qatar constitutes an extension of Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people, their land, and their holy sites. He called for strengthening the efforts of the international community to bring about a ceasefire, to ensure sufficient and sustained delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout the Gaza Strip, and for the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces."[11]

Following Trump's announcement, on 8/10/2025, that all parties had agreed to the arrangement, the OIC welcomed the announcement, viewing it as "a step towards achieving a permanent and comprehensive cessation of the Israeli aggression, enabling the return of the displaced to their homes, the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces, the unhindered and adequate delivery of humanitarian assistance, and commencing the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip." The organization underscored the importance of sustaining "these efforts to eventually achieve justice and peace through ending the Israeli occupation, establishing an independent Palestinian state on the June 4, 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital."[12]

Second: Türkiye

Operation al-Aqsa Flood came at a delicate moment for Türkiye, especially amid its improving ties with Israel. In 2022, Türkiye had restored diplomatic relations and ambassadorial exchanges, with President Erdoğan advocating a separation between relations with Israel and its policies toward Palestinians. Just weeks before the operation, in September 2023, Erdoğan met Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu at the "Turkish House"[13] in New York on the sidelines of the 78th session of the UNGA.[14]

Some analyses suggested that Ankara initially approached Operation al-Aqsa Flood cautiously, viewing its main aim as potentially linked to the evolving Türkiye-Israel relationship. Its official stance immediately after the operation differed from previous conflicts between Palestinian resistance and Israel. Türkiye condemned the "targeting of civilians," offered to assist in the "release of hostages," and called on "all parties" to exercise restraint, presenting a seemingly neutral position.

As the ground offensive in GS unfolded, marked by large-scale massacres, Türkiye returned to its prior stance, supporting the Palestinian narrative and condemning Israel's war crimes.

Türkiye's approach to the war in GS evolved through several stages, shaping both its relations and policy stance, and influencing the roles it has played or sought during and after the war.

This approach can be summarized in four key areas: relations with the Palestinian side, especially Hamas; the stance toward Israel; coordination with the US; and Türkiye's role in GS and the broader Palestine issue, alongside its specific role in the war.

Relations with Hamas

Türkiye's relations with Hamas were tested after Operation al-Aqsa Flood, which several international actors labeled a "terrorist act." Senior Hamas leaders had visited Türkiye frequently, with some present there on the day of the operation.

Nevertheless, Türkiye offered Hamas significant political cover, with Erdoğan denying its terrorist designation and recognizing it as a legitimate resistance movement against Israel,[15] likening it to Turkey's independence-era popular movement[16] and portraying it as a bulwark for Palestine, Anatolia,[17] and the wider Muslim world.[18]

Türkiye condemned the assassination of Hamas Political Bureau head Isma'il Haniyyah in Tehran, with officials, including Foreign Minister and Parliament Speaker Numan Kurtulmuş, calling it a "despicable act" and an attempt by Netanyahu to escalate regional conflict.[19] At Haniyyah's funeral in Doha, Türkiye sent a large delegation led by Kurtulmuş and Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz, including former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, major party leaders, and numerous civil society representatives, activists and journalists.[20]

Many Turkish officials condemned the attempted assassination of the Hamas negotiation delegation in Doha, calling it a "despicable" and "brutal terrorist" act that violated international law, Qatar's sovereignty and threatened mediation efforts to end the war in GS.[21]

During the war, meetings between Türkiye's leadership and Hamas were marked by two notable features. First, they moved beyond a purely security focus to the political level, involving not only Turkish intelligence but also the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and President Erdoğan himself, unlike most Arab and Muslim countries. Second, both the frequency and number of meetings increased significantly, with 15 official sessions held, unprecedented in the history of their relations.

Following a phone call in October 2023, Türkiye's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan met with Hamas Political Bureau Chief Isma'il Haniyyah in Türkiye in

January 2024 to discuss the "release of hostages," a ceasefire in GS, increased humanitarian aid and a two-state solution.[22] On 3/2/2024, a Hamas delegation met with Türkiye's National Intelligence Organization (*Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı*—MİT) director İbrahim Kalın in Doha on a similar agenda.[23]

In April 2024, President Erdoğan hosted a high-level Hamas delegation at Istanbul's Dolmabahçe Palace, led by Isma'il Haniyyah and accompanied by Fidan and Kalın. The meeting addressed efforts to achieve a ceasefire in GS and facilitate humanitarian aid, with Erdoğan stressing "the vital importance of unity among Palestinians" and asserting that "Israel will eventually and inevitably pay the price for its oppression of Palestinians."[24]

In September 2024, Ibrahim Kalın held talks in Ankara with members of Hamas's Political Bureau on ceasefire negotiations.[25]

Fidan also met a Hamas delegation in Ankara, led by Muhammad Darwish, Chairman of the movement's *Shurah* Council and leadership council, to discuss a similar agenda.[26] Another meeting took place in Doha in December 2024, where Fidan reaffirmed Türkiye's position on the Palestine issue, emphasizing that it was "using all its diplomatic capabilities to mobilize the international community towards pushing for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and ending the humanitarian catastrophe" in GS.[27]

In January 2025, President Erdoğan met in Ankara with a Hamas delegation led by Muhammad Darwish, alongside Turkish officials including Fidan and Kalın. During the meeting, Erdoğan stated that "Palestinian group's 471-day struggle in Gaza reaffirmed that the spirit of resistance will endure, praising the group's efforts."[28]

Contacts between the two sides continued. A Hamas delegation led by Darwish visited Türkiye and met Ibrahim Kalin. in April 2025,[29] followed by another meeting in late June 2025.[30] Foreign Minister Fidan also met a similar delegation in early July 2025 to discuss ceasefire efforts[31] and held a further meeting in early August 2025.[32]

Following the ceasefire's entry into force under the plan advanced by US President Donald Trump, Hakan Fidan and İbrahim Kalın jointly met a Hamas delegation in October 2025 to oversee its implementation.[33] Subsequently, on 1/11/2025, Fidan met in Istanbul with a Hamas delegation led by Khalil al-Hayya,

head of its negotiating team and its leader in GS, to address violations of the agreement and the mechanisms governing its implementation.[34] A few days later, Kalın held a separate meeting in Istanbul with the same delegation to explore ways of ensuring the durability of the ceasefire and advancing the implementation of the agreement's subsequent phases.[35] The delegation met once again in December 2025 with both Kalın[36] and Fidan.[37]

In parallel, and beyond its engagement with Hamas, Türkiye hosted 15 released Palestinian prisoners from Jerusalem under the exchange agreement,[38] followed by two additional prisoners, then 13 more,[39] and subsequently six others, bringing the total number who settled in Türkiye to 36.[40]

Furthermore, Ankara dispatched multiple humanitarian aid convoys, thereby positioning Türkiye as the leading contributor globally in this domain. Nevertheless, most of these consignments remained on the Egyptian side of the border as a result of Israel's closure of the Rafah crossing and its continued obstruction of humanitarian access.[41] Concurrently, Istanbul hosted a meeting of the "Group of Parliaments in Support of Palestine," convened under the patronage of the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT) Kurtulmuş, and attended by President Erdoğan, as part of broader and coordinated efforts to support the Palestinians.[42]

The war on GS emerged as the central theme of the Turkish president's addresses to the UNGA in both 2024 and 2025. In his 2024 address, he urged the General Assembly to issue a recommendation authorizing the use of force should it prove incapable of compelling Israel to bring the war to an end, invoking the 1950 "Uniting for Peace" resolution.[43] In his 2025 address, he adopted an even more forceful tone, stating, "There can be no talk of two belligerent parties in Gaza, adding, "This is an occupation, deportation, exile, genocide; this is in fact a policy of collective extermination." He further maintained, "It must be ensured that the cadre of genocide is held accountable before international law."[44]

Position Toward Israel

As previously noted, the war in GS unfolded against the backdrop of expanding ties between Türkiye and Israel, driven by both sides' interest in cooperation across multiple sectors, most prominently energy. In this context, shortly before the outbreak of hostilities, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan asserted during his meeting with Benjamin Netanyahu on 20/9/2023, in New York that "Türkiye can

collaborate with Israel in the fields of energy, technology, innovation, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity."[45]

Nevertheless, bilateral relations rapidly deteriorated and became markedly strained with the onset of the war in GS. While Israel initially took the initiative to recall its ambassadors and close its embassies in several Arab and Muslim countries, anticipating popular backlash following the massacre at the Baptist hospital at the outset of the conflict,[46] Türkiye's official stance evolved progressively as the war in GS continued.

Ankara swiftly shifted from personally criticizing Netanyahu, comparing him to Hitler[47] and even predicting a similar fate,[48] to condemning Israel as a state, labeling it a "terrorist state."[49] In this context, Turkish authorities repeatedly announced the dismantling of espionage networks operating on behalf of Mossad[50] and imposed sentences on some of these networks.[51] Concurrently, Türkiye imposed restrictions on the export of numerous goods to Israel, ultimately announcing a complete suspension of trade,[52] although some reports suggested that limited commerce persisted through circumvention of these measures.

As part of its broader sanctions strategy, Ankara also barred Israeli President Isaac Herzog from using Turkish airspace to travel to Azerbaijan, because he was traveling on a military aircraft rather than a commercial one.[53] Furthermore, Türkiye formally called on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to suspend its partnership with Israel, arguing "It is not possible for the Israeli administration, which has trampled on the fundamental values of our alliance, to continue its partnership relationship with NATO."[54] It subsequently emerged that Ankara had effectively blocked all NATO engagements with Israel since October (the onset of the war in GS) including meetings and joint exercises.[55]

Türkiye spearheaded a diplomatic initiative in collaboration with several key states under the framework of the "Joint Letter," presenting a document signed by 52 Member States and two international organizations to the UN that called for "immediate steps to be taken to halt the provision or transfer of arms, munitions and related equipment to Israel" and emphasized that "Decisive actions are urgently needed to stop this dangerous trajectory, to end impunity and to ensure accountability for all violations, in line with obligations under international law."[56]

In terms of legal accountability for Israel and its leadership, particularly regarding the genocide case brought by South Africa before the ICJ, Türkiye

submitted evidence to the Court demonstrating Israel's culpability[57] and subsequently announced its intention to participate in the proceedings,[58] formally joining in August 2024.[59]

President Erdoğan asserted that Türkiye "must be very powerful so that Israel cannot do what it is doing now in Palestine," invoking Ankara's prior interventions in Libya and the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.[60] In response, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz stated, "Erdogan is going down the path of Saddam Hussein and threatens to attack Israel. He should just remember what happened there and how that ended," which was widely understood as both a personal threat to Erdoğan and a caution regarding potential destabilization and weakening of Türkiye.[61]

As Israeli aggression extended toward both Lebanon and Syria, Ankara began to perceive the threat not merely as a regional destabilization but as a direct security concern. Erdoğan cautioned that Israeli forces were "only two and a half hours from our borders,"[62] and the Turkish Parliament convened a closed session to deliberate on strategies for "countering the Israeli threat."[63] In addition, Ankara drew lessons from the Israeli-Iranian conflict through the prism of self-preservation, implementing practical measures to address the vulnerabilities that Israel had exploited in Iran, thereby acknowledging the real possibility of Israeli aggression against Türkiye itself.[64]

Ankara has cautioned that Israel may seek to occupy the Syrian capital, Damascus, following the collapse of the Assad regime, an outcome that, as the Turkish president cautioned, would lead to "the complete disintegration of Syria's geography" and severely undermine regional stability. He further stressed that Türkiye "will advocate immediate and lasting peace in Syria."[65] Nonetheless, despite sustained Israeli incitement against Türkiye's role in Syria and the direct targeting of Turkish interests on Syrian territory, Ankara has remained committed to avoiding direct confrontation with Israel. Accordingly, it announced the initiation of preliminary contacts,[66] followed by the convening of initial meetings,[67] and subsequently declared that a preliminary understanding had been reached to prevent any military confrontation between the two sides in Syria.[68]

Moreover, following the ceasefire in GS under the Trump plan, Ankara has repeatedly held Israel accountable for continued violations of the agreement,[69] warning that Israeli conduct could precipitate its collapse, while simultaneously commending Hamas and the Palestinian side for their adherence to its terms.[70]

Beyond its stance on the genocidal war in GS, Ankara consistently opposed Israeli policies concerning the WB and Jerusalem. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs formally rejected the Knesset's vote to annex the WB, describing it as "null and void" under international law and "has no legal validity." It underscored that "any attempt by Israel to annex it constitutes an illegitimate and provocative effort aimed at undermining peace efforts."[71]

Similarly, Türkiye has consistently opposed Israel's policies in Jerusalem. President Erdoğan has repeatedly underscored the city's significance in the consciousness of Muslims and Christians, as well as its historical status under the Ottomans, thereby invoking Türkiye's moral responsibility toward it.[72] Netanyahu's comments regarding the "Silwan Epigraph" offered Erdoğan an additional opportunity to reaffirm his country's position, stating, "He (Netanyahu) is spewing hatred at us because we didn't give him the Silvan Epigraph, which is a legacy of the ancestors," emphasizing "They pursue the Silvan Epigraph. We will not give you even a single pebble belonging to Jerusalem." He added, "Türkiye's struggle will continue until an independent Palestinian state with East Quds as its capital is established within the 1967 borders."[73]

Since the onset of the war in GS, Ankara has consistently reiterated its support for a two-state solution, presenting it as the essential framework for achieving peace in the Middle East and describing it as an "urgent necessity."[74] This stance was further reinforced by Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, who underscored Türkiye's rejection of any plan to forcibly displace Palestinians from GS, while stressing that the failure to resolve the Palestine issue through a two-state solution would inevitably prolong conflicts and confrontations, thereby undermining regional stability.[75]

After his meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House, prior to the announcement of the "Trump Peace Plan," Erdoğan emphasized that a two-state solution remains "the formula for lasting peace" in the Middle East, warning that the current situation is unsustainable. "Mr. Trump is also aware that things cannot continue this way," he said.[76] Moreover, Erdoğan welcomed the decisions of Western countries that had formally recognized the State of Palestine, characterizing these recognitions as "building blocks for a two-state solution."[77] He reiterated this official stance in a speech on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, stating, "We will resolutely uphold our two-state solution

policy until a free, sovereign, and independent Palestinian state is established based on the 1967 borders, with East al-Quds serving as its capital."[78]

Cooperation with the US

Türkiye's approach diverged sharply from that of the US administration regarding the war in GS and its subsequent regional escalation. Ankara viewed itself as a potential target of US military posturing, notably the deployment of aircraft carriers to the eastern Mediterranean at the onset of the war.

While Türkiye avoided direct confrontation with Washington, it consistently adopted positions that fundamentally contradicted US policy and, at times, openly criticized it. Erdoğan, for example, condemned the US Congress's hosting of Netanyahu and the excessive accolades during his speech, observing that "those who teach the entire world about democracy and human rights have no qualms about holding the Hitler of our time in high esteem."[79] Moreover, Türkiye formally and publicly opposed plans for the forced displacement of GS's population.[80] Erdoğan further denounced his US counterpart's plan to seize control of GS in coordination with Netanyahu, characterizing it as "a dire threat to world peace," adding, "The US… has unfortunately been siding with terrorist Israel with this attitude. With their assistance, Israel continues to threaten the oppressed and aggrieved Palestine."[81]

In the closing months of the war, Ankara and Washington drew increasingly closer, as the US sought Türkiye's mediation in achieving a ceasefire agreement. Erdoğan subsequently announced that an understanding had been reached with Trump,[82] emphasizing that the latter had requested his intervention "to convince Hamas" to accept the proposed terms, and confirmed that he had engaged directly with its leadership in this regard.[83] Moreover, the US President[84] commended his Turkish counterpart for his role in both GS and Syria during the Sharm El-Sheikh summit, where the ceasefire was formally announced.[85]

The Evolution of Türkiye's Role

For an extended period, Türkiye's involvement in the war in GS was primarily confined to humanitarian assistance and political engagement, functioning as a key component of joint Arab–Islamic initiatives and as a member of the committee established by the Joint Arab Islamic Extraordinary Summit with the OIC and Arab League to support efforts toward a ceasefire in GS.[86]

In the later stages of the war, Türkiye assumed a more proactive role in the negotiation process, particularly concerning Hamas and other Palestinian factions. During this period, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and MİT Chief İbrahim Kalın held multiple meetings with senior Hamas leaders. In the final phase of negotiations, Kalın participated directly in the Qatari-Egyptian mediation, closely monitoring the concluding discussions that culminated in the agreement.

Prior to this, Türkiye was among the eight Arab and Muslim states that met with President Trump in New York shortly before he unveiled his plan, alongside Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Qatar, Jordan, Indonesia and Pakistan,[87] subsequently issuing a joint statement expressing their support once the plan was announced.[88]

Following the declaration of a ceasefire, Ankara assumed a role among the guarantor states responsible for its implementation, together with the US, Qatar and Egypt. President Erdoğan was present on the principal platform for the announcement of Trump's plan at the Sharm El-Sheikh summit. Ankara has consistently reiterated its readiness to play any role that would contribute to consolidating the ceasefire and alleviating the humanitarian situation in GS.[89] Furthermore, it declared its preparedness to deploy technical teams to assist in efforts to recover the bodies of missing Israeli soldiers in the territory.[90]

Nevertheless, Türkiye has consistently issued statements holding Israel accountable for the continued stalling of the agreement's implementation, as it had done previously, while simultaneously emphasizing the imperative of prosecuting those responsible for the atrocities and urging the international community to support a two-state solution.[91]

Moreover, Ankara signaled a clear willingness to participate in the ISF explicitly referenced in the Trump plan. This initiative, however, encountered strong opposition from the Israeli government, with Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar attributing Israel's stance to the fact that "Turkey, led by Erdogan, led a hostile approach against Israel."[92]

The US administration has expressed support for Türkiye's participation, relying on its potential role in "convincing Hamas" during the later stages of the plan, while also anticipating that this involvement could encourage other hesitant Arab and Muslim countries to engage. Nevertheless, US Vice President J.D. Vance stressed, "We're not going to force anything on our Israeli friends when it comes to foreign troops on their soil, but we do think that there's a constructive role

for the Turks to play."[93] Moreover, US Ambassador to Ankara, Tom Barrack, revealed efforts to strengthen Türkiye-Israel relations, beginning with economic agreements; however, as of this writing, there is no concrete indication of progress along this trajectory. As a result, Türkiye was, for instance, excluded from the US-led conference in Doha convened to discuss the formation of the ISF.[94]

Türkiye took part in the Miami summit, which convened the four guarantor states to deliberate on modalities for advancing to the second phase of the agreement. In this context, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan emphasized, "As Türkiye, we stated that three parameters are important for us in any work to be carried out regarding Gaza. First, Gaza must be governed by Gazans; second, Gaza must not be divided territorially in any way; and third, everything done in Gaza must be done for Gazans." He added, "The ongoing violations by Israel, in particular, are making the process incredibly more difficult. What we see is that all parties are in agreement on this issue," however, "I think it was the most important meeting at the highest level since Sharm el-Sheikh."[95]

Future Outlook

In recent years, Türkiye has markedly enhanced its capabilities and overall power, enabling it to assume more advanced regional roles. This trajectory has been evident in the expansion of its defense industries, the improvement of its relations with several Arab countries, the easing of tensions with the EU, and relatively less strained relations with the US under President Trump. During the period covered by this report, two developments in particular have further strengthened Türkiye's regional standing, and that of President Erdoğan specifically: first, the political track aimed at resolving the domestic Kurdish issue, which culminated in the dissolution of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*—PKK); and second, the collapse of the Syrian regime, followed by the emergence of a leadership inclined toward establishing strategic relations with Ankara.

In contrast, Israel achieved decisive strikes against several of its regional adversaries, including Iran, yet it has been unable to weaken or neutralize them entirely. Its emerging security strategy following the October 7, 2023 operation emphasizes preemptively confronting and neutralizing potential threats before they materialize, often through cross-border strikes. Furthermore, developments in Syria, specifically the expansion of Turkish influence and the strengthening of

Ankara's ties with the new Syrian leadership, alongside the intensification and deepening of Israeli attacks on the latter, have positioned Türkiye and Israel on opposite ends of a strategic equation in which their core interests conflict. This dynamic exacerbates their disputes and heightens the likelihood of confrontation.

Israel first designated Türkiye as a potential threat in 2020, though this classification did not immediately translate into operational consequences on the ground.[96] Nevertheless, the "Nagel" committee, commissioned by the Netanyahu government, recently recommended in its study that preparations be undertaken for a possible direct military confrontation with Ankara.[97] From Ankara's perspective, Israel is increasingly viewed as a direct threat, particularly in light of ongoing regional developments, most notably in Syria. This perception has been articulated in the above mentioned sessions of the Turkish Parliament and in statements by President Erdoğan, and has been accompanied by practical measures designed to close vulnerabilities that could be exploited in the event of a direct Israeli strike on Turkish territory.

Perceived as a growing threat to Israel, Türkiye's expanding influence in Syria, including the potential establishment of Turkish military bases on Syrian territory, prompted Israel to target Turkish interests within the country directly. This reportedly involved strikes on military bases visited by Turkish delegations evaluating the feasibility of force deployments,[98] as well as on Turkish surveillance installations, according to Israeli claims.[99] In turn, reports suggested that Türkiye was taking measures to deploy radar systems on Syrian soil, which could significantly constrain the operational freedom of the Israeli Air Force.[100]

Israel is determined to prevent Turkish forces from "encircling" it, from the north in Syria and the south in GS, and, as a result, has imposed a firm and unequivocal veto on Türkiye's participation in the ISF. Moreover, Israel seeks to contain and directly challenge Türkiye by mobilizing, supporting and inciting its adversaries. A striking example of this strategy is the 10th Trilateral Summit convened with Greece and Cyprus in Jerusalem, which discussed the formation of a Joint Rapid Response Force tasked with protecting infrastructure in the Eastern Mediterranean, clearly directed against Türkiye. At the summit, "Netanyahu said in a thinly veiled reference to Turkey that 'those who fantasize they can reestablish their empires and their dominion over our lands' should 'forget it.'"[101] Similarly, Israeli statements have indicated support for the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in opposition to Türkiye,[102] which has consistently advocated integrating the SDF

into a restructured Syrian army and has signaled the potential for an imminent military operation in coordination with Damascus.[103]

Accordingly, while the prospect of direct confrontation between Türkiye and Israel in the near term remains limited, the likelihood of indirect clashes is considerable, with initial signs already beginning to emerge. In this regard, the situation surrounding SDF or Israel's repeated strikes on Syria could act as a catalyst, potentially escalating tensions into a more complex confrontation.

The US administration seeks to engage Ankara in international stabilization efforts and broader arrangements in GS, owing to its strong ties with Hamas, which position it to "persuade" the movement to undertake certain measures and decisions. Moreover, Türkiye's involvement serves as an incentive for a number of Arab and Muslim countries to participate. Despite Ankara's status as one of the guarantors of the ceasefire, Israel's veto over its involvement remains both real and firm, and is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, thereby framing and significantly constraining Türkiye's role in GS.

Accordingly, Türkiye is set to remain within the framework of the guarantor quartet, while simultaneously seeking closer ties with Washington to help temper Israel's position regarding its participation in the ISF. In this context, together with Qatar and Egypt, Türkiye is likely to advocate for more flexible interpretations of the Trump plan's provisions, particularly those concerning the Palestinian Technocratic Committee and the BoP, while carefully avoiding direct confrontation or tensions with Trump. The approach adopted by Türkiye, in concert with Qatar and Egypt, appears to combine initial endorsement of the US president's declarations and proposed measures with subsequent efforts to recalibrate them through direct dialogue and by highlighting practical, on-the-ground constraints. Nonetheless, the precise limits of Türkiye's engagement remain unclear, particularly regarding the "disarmament" component envisioned under the plan through the ISF, on which the Turkish Foreign Minister has recently expressed reservations concerning its timing and sequencing, though not its underlying principle.[104]

In conclusion, Türkiye's relations with the Palestinian side, particularly Hamas, are likely to continue along the current trajectory over the coming year, with Ankara seeking a more prominent role in Gaza's internal arrangements. Conversely, improvement in relations with Israel appears unlikely in the near term, at least while Netanyahu remains in power, suggesting that the Knesset elections

scheduled for 2026 may prove decisive in shaping the future of Türkiye-Israel relations.

In this context, Israeli behavior constitutes a central factor influencing Türkiye's broader approach to the Palestine issue, as well as its stance toward the Trump plan regarding Gaza. By "Israeli behavior," we refer to a range of actions, including the continued veto on Türkiye's participation in the ISF, ongoing violations of the ceasefire in GS, the risk of renewed regional war, particularly against Lebanon and Iran, and scenarios of direct or indirect confrontation in Syria, including through the "SDF" or other instruments.

Accordingly, Türkiye's posture toward the war on GS has evolved since the outset of hostilities: from an initial expression of solidarity with the Palestinian side to a stance increasingly informed by self-perceived threats and the anticipation of potential confrontations with Israel. This trajectory may even extend toward a more explicit consideration of indirect confrontation, particularly in the Syrian context.

Third: Iran

Iran faced an unprecedented strategic challenge following Operation al-Aqsa Flood by Hamas on 7/10/2023, which elevated the Palestine issue to a regional and international priority while exposing Iran to Israeli and US threats that escalated into direct war in June 2025, marking its first direct confrontation with Israel since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Iran expressed its support for Operation al-Aqsa Flood from the outset, while denying any direct involvement. Concurrently, it condemned in international forums the massacres committed by Israel against the Palestinian people in GS. Iranian officials also held several meetings with Hamas leaders, reaffirming their political and military support for the movement and other Palestinian factions, at both the military and political levels. President Masoud Pezeshkian declared that "the Palestinian nation would not be left alone in this difficult situation," stressing that his "government will prioritize the issue of Palestine as the central issue of the Islamic world; We will try to achieve a ceasefire and stop killing in the Gaza Strip," asserting that Iran "will seriously pursue the end of the long-term occupation of the

Palestinian lands" and that "the future of Gaza and Palestine should be determined by the people of this land."[105]

Furthermore, in his address before the UNGA, the Iranian president sharply criticized Israel, stating that it had committed genocide in the GS and that "It is imperative that the international community should immediately stop the violence and bring about a permanent cease-fire in Gaza." He further asserted that "Israel has been defeated in Gaza and no amount of barbaric violence can restore its myth of invincibility," adding, "blind Israeli state terrorism over the past few days in Lebanon followed by a massive aggression with thousands of victims cannot go unanswered."[106]

Similarly, the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei, asserted that Israel "has gradually come to the conclusion that they will never triumph over Hamas and Hizbullah." He further maintained that "governments of the region are capable of establishing peace and security," arguing that "the main problem facing the region is foreign interference." Khamenei also affirmed that "the Palestinian people have the right to stand against an enemy that … ruined their lives," and contended that "no one has the right to criticize them [Lebanese] for helping" the Palestinians defend their land. In addition, he stated that "the resistance in Gaza had captured the world's attention," and that "the struggles of the fighters of Palestine and Lebanon have been able to push back the Zionist regime to the position it was in 70 years ago."[107]

In the same vein of endorsing Hamas's actions, Iran's permanent mission to the UN stated that the "spirit of resistance will be strengthened" following the killing of Yahya Sinwar. In a post on X platform, the mission asserted that Sinwar. "will become a model for the youth and children who will carry forward his path toward the liberation of Palestine. As long as occupation and aggression exist, resistance will endure."[108]

Iran's stance represented a clear challenge to Western policies, which centered on condemning Hamas while simultaneously extending strong support to Tel Aviv. Operation al-Aqsa Flood, however, underscored Israel's need for external protection by exposing significant vulnerabilities within its security and intelligence apparatus. Accordingly, the G7 Defense Ministers urged "Iran to refrain from providing support to Hamas, Hizbullah, Houthis and other non-state

actors, and taking further actions that could destabilize the region and trigger an uncontrolled process of escalation."[109]

The Western contradiction is evident: supporting the legitimate right to resistance is deemed "destabilizing," while backing Israel politically, militarily, economically, through media and security channels, and endorsing its aggressions and massacres is framed as "stabilizing"!! This perspective closely mirrors Israel's view of Iran, which Benjamin Netanyahu describes as the "head of the octopus" that must be eliminated in confronting resistance movements.

Iran was fully aware of the threats arising from its stance on the resistance and the Palestine issue. Under the pretext of its nuclear program, which it remained eager to negotiate with the US and European states, Iran sought to avoid a military confrontation it believed Israel sought. This approach, often termed "strategic patience," was sustained despite repeated Israeli assassinations of IRGC leaders, particularly in Syria. Iran's restraint was guided by the principle of denying the enemy opportunities to expand regional conflict. Following the assassination of Sheikh Saleh al-'Aruri, the IRGC affirmed that the operation would not provoke the resistance into a "strategic mistakes," and that the "strategic patience" of both the resistance and Hizbullah "will not deviate from the orbit of rationality and logic."[110]

However, Iran will, for the first time, abandon its strategy of "strategic patience" following its threats of a decisive response to the assassination of Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi on 1/4/2024, one of the IRGC's senior commanders in Syria. The Iranian ambassador in Damascus, Hossein Akbari, had stated that this action "will be met with Iran's decisive response."[111] Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian condemned the targeting of the consulate building as "a violation of all international obligations and conventions."[112]

Operation True Promise 1

In retaliation for the assassination of IRGC Brigadier General Zahedi in Damascus, Iran, for the first time in its history, launched on 13/4/2024 hundreds of drones and ballistic missiles directed at targets in Israel.

Israeli media acknowledged the involvement of other states in countering the Iranian strikes. Channel 12 reported that, according to the Israeli army, US and British fighter jets intercepted some of the drones over the Iraqi-Syrian border,

while French military assets also contributed to defending Israel against the Iranian attack.[113]

Emphasizing that Iran does not seek to expand the war or engage in the open confrontation it believes Israel aims for, IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami stated that the Iranian strike has concluded and there is no intention to continue it; however, the country will respond decisively if Israel targets its interests. He further warned that if Washington participates in any attack against Iran, its bases in the region will be targeted and will not be safe.[114]

In his first public statement on the strikes targeting Israel, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei asserted that "the number of missiles launched or hitting their targets, which has been a focus of the enemy, is secondary." He pointed out that "the primary issue was demonstrating the emergence of the willpower of the Iranian people and the Armed Forces on the global stage and this is what has upset the other side."[115]

Iran's mission to the UN rejected US accusations that it had attacked a US military site on the Jordan-Syria border, which resulted in three US soldiers killed and 34 wounded. In a statement to the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), the mission affirmed that "Iran had no connection and had nothing to do with the attack on the US base," stressing that the "conflict between US forces and resistance groups in the region, which reciprocate retaliatory attacks."[116]

Nevertheless, Iran's efforts to avoid a broader war conflicted with Israel's long-standing strategy, which had been preparing for years to target the Iranian regime, referred to by Netanyahu as the "head of the octopus," with the aim of dismantling regional resistance movements.[117]

As part of its provocations, either to draw Iran into a broader conflict or to expose its perceived weakness, Israel carried out a targeted assassination on Iranian soil, killing Hamas Political Bureau Chief Isma'il Haniyyah in central Tehran on 31/7/2024 during his visit to attend the inauguration of President Masoud Pezeshkian. The operation also struck at a leading Palestinian figure central to negotiations and relations with Arab and Muslim countries.

The assassination presented a significant challenge for Iran, sparking internal debate between the imperative to respond and caution against entanglement in the war Israel seeks. Following the attack, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei declared,

"we believe it is our duty to take revenge," asserting that Israel has "prepared the ground for a severe punishment."[118] The IRGC similarly stated that Israel's crime would be met with a forceful response from the resistance front, particularly from Iran.[119]

Thousands of Iranians attended Haniyyah's funeral in Tehran amid calls for retaliation. The Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, led the prayers, while mourners carried images of Haniyyah and Palestinian flags at the University of Tehran. Official Iranian television broadcast scenes of the coffins of Haniyyah and his bodyguard, killed in the same strike, draped in Palestinian flags, with senior officials present, including President Masoud Pezeshkian and IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami.

The assassination placed Iran in a delicate position, balancing a direct response against the risk of falling into an "Israeli trap." Israel seeks to escalate the conflict from the GS and its support fronts in Lebanon and Yemen into a direct confrontation with Iran, potentially involving the US, an engagement Iran deems untimely. President Pezeshkian made this stance clear during his meeting with Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu, stating that Israel's "criminal acts" in Gaza coupled with its assassination of Haniyyah "are a clear example of violating international law." He added, "Iran never seeks to escalate tensions and spread war in the region, but the Israeli regime will definitely receive a response to its crimes."[120]

In this context, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi emphasized that Iran remains fully "vigilant" and "will not fall into Israel's trap," describing the assassination of Isma'il Haniyyah in Tehran as "an attempt to provoke and enrage us, aiming to draw us into a broader conflict."[121]

Simultaneously, Iran expressed concern that war with Israel could jeopardize the ceasefire in the GS, which it regarded as a priority. Its permanent mission to the UN responded to the media's question about whether Iran will postpone the response to Israel until the talks regarding the ceasefire in Gaza. It stated, "Establishing a lasting ceasefire in Gaza is our priority; Any agreement that Hamas accepts will be accepted by us."[122]

In the same vein, the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed that Tehran would not deploy forces to support Lebanon or Palestine, maintaining that the resistance movements in both arenas possess sufficient capacity to confront

Israel. During his weekly press conference, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani stated that Lebanon and Palestine possess the requisite capability to confront Israeli aggression, and that there is no need to deploy auxiliary or volunteer Iranian forces. He further added that Iran has received no requests for assistance and is aware that such support is not required.[123]

The Supreme Leader, Ayatollah ʻAli Khamenei, received a Hamas delegation that included the head of the movement's *Shura* (consultative) Council, Muhammad Darwish, along with senior officials Khalil al-Hayya and Nizar ʻAwadallah. Khamenei said during the meeting, "You prevailed over the Zionist regime and, of course, over the United States, and by God's grace, you did not allow them to achieve any of their goals." He pointed out that the issue of defending Palestine and supporting the Palestinian people is not a matter of debate in the minds of the Iranian people but a "settled issue." "For us, Palestine is a central issue, and the victory of Palestine is also a definite matter" the Leader said.[124]

Israel effectively foreclosed Iran's strategic options by launching a direct assault on Lebanon, beginning with the assassination of Hizbullah Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah on 27/9/2024, one of Tehran's most consequential allies within the Axis of Resistance. In response, Iran carried out a direct retaliatory strike against Israel on 1/10/2024 (Operation True Promise 2). In a statement, the IRGC described the operation as retaliation for the assassinations of Isma'il Haniyyah, Hasan Nasrallah, and IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan, who had been present alongside Nasrallah at the time of the attack.

The IRGC announced that it had targeted deep inside the occupied territories. In its official statement, it maintained that the "operation was carried out with the approval of the Supreme National Security Council and notification of the General Staff of the Armed Forces and the support of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army and the Ministry of Defense." It further warned that "if the Zionist regime reacts militarily to this operation, which is in accordance with the legal rights of the country and international laws, it will face further crushing and destructive attacks."[125] The IRGC added that "although the area was protected by the most advanced and large-scale defense systems, 90% of the missiles hit the targets successfully."[126] In parallel, *The Jerusalem Post* reported, on 14/10/2024, that the Iranian missile attack on Israel caused an estimated 200 million shekels (approximately $53 million) in damage to private property. Israel subsequently

"vowed to retaliate against Iran for the missile barrage and has been discussing its options with the U.S. in recent weeks."[127]

Although Iran regarded this response as harsher than the first, it warned against any repeat of Israeli aggression, emphasizing the need for US "restraint." Accordingly, "in indirect message to the US via Qatar, Iran says it doesn't want a regional war, but that Israel must be 'deterred.'"[128] Nonetheless, the scenario Iran sought to avoid appears to have materialized. Operations True Promise 1 and 2, designed to prevent a full-scale conflict, failed to dissuade Israel from engaging directly with what Benjamin Netanyahu has called the "head of the octopus," aiming for a decisive victory over the Axis of Resistance. As a result, the confrontation has escalated from a war against the Axis alone to one directly targeting its perceived "head."

This doctrine, which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has articulated over several years, frames Iran not merely as a regionally influential state but as an "octopus," with its head in Tehran and limbs extending across Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and the GS. From the Israeli perspective, these limbs constitute a direct, multi-front threat that requires a comprehensive strategy rather than isolated responses.[129]

In the early hours of Friday, 13/6/2025, Israel launched a surprise attack on multiple sites in Iran, codenamed Operation Rising Lion, employing over 200 fighter jets. The strikes targeted senior commanders in the Iranian army and IRGC, as well as military and nuclear facilities and high-ranking officials across Iran's security, military, and research institutions. The operation's name was inspired by a passage in the Old Testament, Book of Numbers, Chapter 23, Verse 24: "Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion; he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey and drink the blood of the slain." [130]

The Israeli army stated that it had targeted dozens of Iranian sites, including military headquarters and nuclear facilities. In an official statement, it declared that, "following the directive of the political echelon, the IDF launched a preemptive, precise, combined offensive based on high-quality intelligence to strike Iran's nuclear program, and in response to the Iranian regime's ongoing aggression against Israel."[131] Iranian media reported the assassination of IRGC Commander-in-Chief Hossein Salami, along with the nuclear scientists

Fereydoon Abbasi and Mohammad-Mehdi Tehranchi. It also announced the killing of Gholam Ali Rashid, commander of the IRGC's Khatam al-Anbia Headquarters, as well as Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces Mohammad Bagheri.[132]

This attack represented the gravest challenge Iran has confronted, not only in comparison with the pressures it faced between 2024 and 2025 following Operation al-Aqsa Flood, the assassination of Isma'il Haniyyah, the war on Lebanon, and the killing of Hasan Nasrallah, but arguably since the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Significantly, the apparent objective extended beyond the destruction of nuclear facilities to the regime itself.

Although Israel and the US did not explicitly declare regime change as their aim, the contours of the attack indicated one of two strategic objectives: either to impose a coercive settlement terminating Iran's nuclear program while allowing the regime to weaken from within, or to precipitate a decisive confrontation intended, by Israel, and backed by the US, to culminate in its collapse.[133] This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that the sudden outbreak of hostilities occurred amid ongoing negotiations with the US over Iran's nuclear program, a sequence widely regarded in Tehran as an act of strategic deception. Moreover, the escalation was accompanied by a coordinated media and strategic "deception campaign" involving Israel and the US, designed to convince Iran that Israeli military movements were merely "pressure tactics" preceding a return to nuclear negotiations.[134]

The Iranian Response

Iran delayed only a few hours before retaliating against the Israeli attack. The very war it had sought to avoid, believing it could prevent Israel from drawing it into direct confrontation, had effectively commenced. On 14/6/2025, Iran launched missile strikes against Israeli targets under the designation Operation True Promise 3, where official sources announced that ballistic missiles were fired from bases in Tehran and Kermanshah.[135]

Israeli Channel 13 reported "unprecedented destruction" in the greater Tel Aviv area, noting that dozens of buildings and vehicles sustained direct damage from Iranian missiles or from debris generated by interception attempts.[136]

Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, declared in a series of posts on X the launch of what he termed a "battle" against Israel, stressing that Tehran would not enter into any negotiations with the Israeli state. He posted, "We must act

forcefully against the terrorist Zionist entity. We will show no leniency toward the Zionists."[137]

Iranian Chief of Staff Abdolrahim Mousavi stated that his country's "existence and territorial integrity" faced an unprecedented threat during the 12-day war, with Israel.[138]

Direct US Intervention in the War

Amid the Israeli-Iranian confrontation, the US conducted airstrikes on three Iranian nuclear facilities on 22/6/2025. President Trump confirmed the operation's success, targeting the Fordow, Natanz and Esfahan sites, following the deployment of B2 bombers from a US base across the Pacific. He stated that "Iran's key nuclear enrichment facilities have been completely and totally obliterated" and warned of "far greater" attacks if Iran does not "make peace."[139]

Israeli media reported that about 30 tons of explosives were dropped on Fordow, while ABC News cited an Israeli source noting that "The U.S. and Israel had practiced this attack in a military exercise about a year ago."[140]

In the aftermath of the US strikes on its nuclear facilities, Iranian media cited Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi as declaring that the door to diplomacy had been "permanently closed." He added that, under such circumstances, calls for Iran to return to diplomatic engagement were devoid of meaning.[141]

A joint statement was subsequently issued by a number of Arab and Muslim countries rejecting the Israeli attacks against Iran. It stated:

> In light of the rapidly evolving regional developments and the unprecedented escalation of tensions in the Middle East, particularly owing to the ongoing military aggression of Israel against the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Foreign Ministers of the State of Qatar, People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Kingdom of Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, the Republic of Chad, the Union of the Comoros, the Republic of Djibouti, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Republic of Iraq, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the State of Kuwait, the State of Libya, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Republic of the Sudan, the Republic of Türkiye, the Sultanate of Oman, and the United Arab Emirates hereby affirm… The categorical rejection and condemnation of Israel's recent attacks on the Islamic Republic of Iran since the 13th of June 2025, and any actions that contravene international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.[142]

The Iranian Response

In retaliation for the attack on its nuclear facilities, Iran launched a strike on the US Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar, in an operation it designated Herald of Victory. Doha announced that its air defenses had successfully intercepted the Iranian missiles. In an official statement, the IRGC declared that following the US aggression against our nuclear facilities, Iran delivered a devastating blow to the US Al-Udeid base in Qatar.[143] According to Axios, citing an Israeli official, Iran launched six missiles towards US bases in Qatar. Meanwhile, Iran's Supreme National Security Council stated that "the targeting of Al-Udeid was carried out in a way that kept a safe distance from residential areas in Qatar, posing no threat to the Qatari people." For his part, a US official told Al Jazeera that no US personnel in Qatar were injured as a result of the Iranian missile attack.[144]

Immediately following the announcement of a ceasefire, the US president asserted that Iran's nuclear facilities had been destroyed and that Iran had been defeated. By contrast, Iran's Supreme National Security Council declared that it had compelled the enemy to "regret its actions, acknowledge defeat, and unilaterally cease its aggression."[145] For his part, President Masoud Pezeshkian proclaimed the end of the war with Israel as a "historic victory" for the Iranian nation. He also stated, "We are ready to resolve issues between ourselves and the US based on international frameworks."[146] In a similar vein, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei stated in a public address that Israel "was practically knocked out and crushed" and that the US wasn't "able to achieve anything significant." He congratulated Iranians "on the victory over the fallacious Zionist regime. With all that commotion and all those claims, the Zionist regime was practically knocked out and crushed under the blows of the Islamic Republic."[147]

Ynet Global cited a senior Israeli official who cautioned, "We must not be deceived; Iran remains a formidable power," adding that "Iran retains a substantial missile arsenal and its nuclear program has not been fully destroyed."[148] In the same vein, Israeli Chief of General Staff Eyal Zamir declared in August 2025, "We are not finished with Iran yet," describing the 12-day conflict in June as merely the first phase of the operation.[149]

Ultimately, the US president opted to halt the war in the GS, after Israel's evident failure to achieve its goals of dismantling Hamas and securing the release of prisoners. He "felt like the Israelis were getting a little bit out of control in what

they were doing, and that it was time to be very strong and stop them from doing things that he felt were not in their long-term interests."[150]

Iran endorsed the ceasefire announcement and supported Hamas and other Palestinian factions in accepting the first phase of Trump's plan, which entailed ending the war, preventing displacement, facilitating humanitarian aid, and conducting a prisoner exchange. Nevertheless, Tehran declined to participate in the Sharm el-Sheikh summit held on 13/10/2025 at the invitation of the Egyptian president. In its official statement, the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed that Iran "has consistently supported every measure and initiative aimed at halting the genocidal war, ensuring the withdrawal of occupying forces, enabling the entry of humanitarian assistance, securing the release of Palestinian prisoners, and realizing the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people." It further affirmed its support for "the legitimate resistance of the Palestinian nation in its pursuit of the right to self-determination," while underscoring the "legal, humanitarian, and moral duty" of States and competent international institutions "to pursue justice through the identification and prosecution of" Israel war criminals."[151]

The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs further expressed its readiness to contribute to humanitarian relief and reconstruction efforts in the GS, in line with its stated objective of breaking the siege. Concurrently, it warned of the "dangerous dimensions and aspects" of Trump's plan and reiterated "its warning about the repeated breaches and obstructionism by the Zionist regime in fulfilling its promises."[152]

Despite Israel's lack of formal adherence to the agreement, Iran's support for a ceasefire remained steadfast, consistent with its advocacy since the onset of the aggression. President Masoud Pezeshkian had stated that he would support any ceasefire in the GS. Speaking to journalists on the sidelines of the UNGA meeting, he affirmed his support for any agreement that would end the Palestinians' tragedy, save lives and alleviate the suffering of women and children from hunger.[153] In the same vein, the Iranian Foreign Ministry considered any decision regarding the future of the GS "to be within the authority of the Palestinian people and resistance," adding that it supports "any initiative that entails the cessation of ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity in Gaza."[154]

Analysts noted that while the agreement revealed Israel's failure to achieve its objectives and affirmed the resilience of the resistance, Iran remains concerned

that post-GS arrangements could advance normalization through the Abraham Accords and marginalize its role in the regional balance.[155]

Future Outlook

Despite the cessation of hostilities with Israel and the US, Iran remains wary, as unresolved domestic and regional issues continue to present multiple potential scenarios.

- The ceasefire with Israel does not signal an end to enmity or to the underlying causes of the war. Accordingly, Iran is racing to strengthen its missile arsenal and defense systems, repair war-related damage, and prepare for a potential future war, at a time when Israeli statements assert that the war with Iran is far from over.
- Although Iran had previously expressed willingness to negotiate with the US and the European Troika over its nuclear program, the war launched against it has undermined its trust in any renewed talks, especially since the war erupted just two days before a scheduled negotiation in Muscat, Oman, which Iran perceived as a betrayal. As a result, Iran now confronts reinstated sanctions while simultaneously needing to negotiate to secure recognition of its peaceful nuclear program, lift these sanctions, and address its economic challenges.
- Iran is expected, together with other resistance forces, to focus on rebuilding and strengthening its capabilities, drawing on the lessons acquired during the war and on the relative strengths, weaknesses, and operational capacities of each force. This will require a shared assessment of the war's outcomes and coordinated planning among resistance forces in the coming stages, whether in the context of a formal ceasefire or as preparation for potential future hostilities in the GS or Lebanon.
- The region remains highly unstable amid efforts to establish a regional order in which Iran and its allies within the resistance movements occupy marginal, if any, roles. This dynamic is evident in calls for "disarmament" in the GS and Lebanon, as well as in US and European demands to halt uranium enrichment and curb Iran's missile capabilities. Iran is likely to invest significant effort in countering such a system, particularly by strengthening trust-based ties with key regional states, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Türkiye. Following the Israeli attack on Qatar, the Iranian president emphasized this approach, noting: "No

country in the region will be immune unless they unite to confront the occupying regime..”[156]

- Iran aims to enhance its defensive capabilities to deter any potential aggression, while offering support, as feasible, to parties within the Axis of Resistance and remaining ready to negotiate its nuclear program without preconditions.
- The Israeli-US campaign against Iran has highlighted Tehran’s pivotal role in supporting resistance movements. Despite sustained threats and pressures, Iran has consistently reaffirmed its commitment to the Palestine issue and to backing resistance against Israel, a stance echoed by resistance leaders in the GS and Lebanon.
- Iran, together with other parties of the Axis of Resistance, is expected to coordinate efforts to counter the promotion of normalization and the Abraham Accords, which the US is likely to seek to expand. This is especially important as the post-war phase may involve reconstruction in the GS and Lebanon, potentially extending over several years.

Overall, the US-Israeli war on Iran, launched in late February 2026, further reinforces these trends.

Fourth: Other Muslim Countries

Malaysia

During 2024–2025, Malaysia maintained its firm support for the Palestine issue and the defense of Palestinian legitimate rights. It supported South Africa’s case before the ICJ against Israel over its actions in the GS, including allegations of genocide. In a January 2024 statement, Malaysia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, “The legal action against Israel before ICJ is a timely and tangible step towards legal accountability for Israel’s atrocities in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) at large,” adding, “Malaysia calls on Israel to fulfil its obligations under international law and to immediately end its atrocities against Palestinians.”[157]

In this context, Malaysia announced a $2.1 million contribution to UNRWA, following Israel’s attack on the UN agency and the subsequent suspension of aid

through it by several Western states. Earlier, a Malaysian parliamentary delegation, led by Deputy Foreign Minister Mohamad Alamin, visited Cairo to facilitate the delivery of Malaysian emergency and humanitarian relief supplies to the Palestinian people in the GS.[158]

In a notably forthright stance, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim "slammed the West for its inconsistent application of international law in the Israel-Gaza war and called out its hypocrisy in condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine but not supporting a ceasefire in Gaza." Speaking at Canberra's Australian National University, he argued that "the gut-wrenching tragedy that continues to unfold in the Gaza Strip has laid bare the self-serving nature of much valued, the much vaunted rules-based order." He questioned the West's "so vociferous, vehement and unequivocal" condemnation of Russian invasion of Ukraine, "while remaining utterly silent on the relentless bloodletting inflicted on the innocent men, women and children of Gaza," stressing that international law must not be applied selectively.[159]

Later, Anwar Ibrahim announced his country's readiness to deploy peacekeeping forces to secure a ceasefire in the GS. In a social media statement, he noted that he had spoken by phone with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, during which they discussed the attacks on Palestine and confirmed both countries' willingness to send peacekeeping forces to the GS in coordination with Indonesia, should the UN mandate it.[160]

In a televised interview, Ibrahim reaffirmed that Malaysia would not recognize Israel under any circumstances, despite significant pressure over his publicly declared stance, stressing that this policy would remain unchanged and that Malaysia's support for the Palestine issue would continue.[161]

Malaysia has also sustained its support in international forums. While chairing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the bloc issued a statement welcoming the ceasefire in GS and calling for the entry of humanitarian aid.[162]

In February 2025, Malaysia took part in a humanitarian airdrop to the GS conducted by the Jordanian Air Force, following a $5 million contribution made in December 2024 by the Malaysian public through the Malaysian Humanitarian Trust Fund for the People of Palestine (AAKRP) to support the humanitarian air bridge.[163]

Amid Israel's ongoing attacks on civilians and siege of the GS, Malaysia called for an investigation into the deaths of 1,300 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces while awaiting humanitarian aid, often described as "death traps."[164]

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim described the US "peace" plan as "far from perfect" but stressed that the immediate priority "must be to halt the bloodshed and deliver aid to the Palestinian people." On X, he highlighted that the real responsibility lies in "ending Zionist atrocities, ensuring food and water reach the people, and keeping hope alive for those who still endure."[165]

Pakistan

Pakistan maintained its consistent support for the Palestine issue, while allowing broad space for public expressions of solidarity. President Arif Alvi welcomed the ICJ's preliminary ruling in the case brought by South Africa against Israel for committing genocide in the GS, calling it "an outstanding judgment" and urging Israel to "immediately stop the genocide and bloodshed of the innocent civilians in Gaza." He emphasized that the ruling exposes "the inhuman acts and barbarism being committed by Israel, adding that Israel had transgressed all boundaries of humanity by targeting women, children, and hospitals and didn't even spare people who were standing in queue for food." He "urged the international community and other organs of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, to take steps for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and prevent Israel from committing further bloodshed in Palestine."[166]

On 26/1/2024, the ICJ ruled that "Israel must take all measures within its power to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide in relation to members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip," and that the Palestinians in Gaza have the right "to be protected from acts of genocide."[167]

In later court sessions, Pakistan's representative asserted that Israel had created irreversible facts on the ground, enforcing discrimination against Palestinians since 1967 and restricting Muslim and Christian worship in Jerusalem. He stressed that a two-state solution must underpin peace and called for the reversal of all changes resulting from the forcible annexation of land.[168]

Pakistan condemned the UNSC's failure to grant Palestine full UN membership due to the US veto.[169] Subsequently, Pakistan's Alternate Permanent Representative to the UN, Asim Iftikhar, called on the international community to unite in

resolving the Palestine issue, establish "safe and secure humanitarian corridors," and "prioritize rebuilding Gaza's shattered healthcare system." He also reaffirmed Pakistan's support for granting Palestine full UN membership, considering it "a moral imperative to secure irreversibility of the two-state solution."[170]

Regarding Israel's assassination of Hamas Political Bureau Chief Isma'il Haniyyah in Tehran on 31/7/2024, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif condemned the act as a violation of all norms, and the Pakistani parliament adopted a resolution denouncing it.[171]

In a notable move, Pakistan admitted more than 150 medical and dental students from the GS to continue their studies at Pakistani universities. Welcoming the students, the prime minister said, "Dear students, our brothers, sisters, Pakistan is your second home," adding, "Our hearts are there for you, our homes are there for you, our institutions are there for you, our teachers are there for you."[172]

Pakistan swiftly expressed solidarity with Iran following Israel's attacks in June 2025. The Pakistani prime minister conveyed to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian his country's "unwavering solidarity with the brotherly people of Iran in the face of Israel's unprovoked aggression." Meanwhile, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif stated that "after targeting Palestine and Yemen, Israel has now launched attacks on Iran," thus stressing that "The Muslim Ummah must stand united in today's difficult time."[173]

In a related development, Pakistan and the PA signed a memorandum of understanding on health and pharmaceuticals, with Pakistan's health minister reaffirming Islamabad's unwavering support for the State of Palestine.[174]

Pakistan's foreign minister also commented on US President Donald Trump's plan to halt the war on the GS, announced in October 2025, noting that its immediate aims were to secure a ceasefire, stop the bloodshed, enable the flow of humanitarian aid and end forced displacement.[175]

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned Israel's 1/10/2025 attack on the Global Sumud Flotilla to the GS, calling it a "dastardly act." He urged the immediate release of all those illegally apprehended, noting "their crime was to carry aid for the hapless Palestinian people," and emphasized that "This barbarity must end. Peace must be given a chance and humanitarian aid must reach those in need."[176]

Regarding the deployment of an international peacekeeping force in the GS, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar announced that "Pakistan was ready to commit its troops to the Gaza peace force," emphasizing that Hamas's disarmament is the responsibility of the "Palestinian law enforcement agencies," not the peacekeepers'.[177]

Indonesia

In 2024, Israeli media reported secret talks between Indonesia and Israel on normalization, but no progress occurred in 2024–2025. Indonesia maintained its support for the Palestine issue during Israel's war on GS, sending 242 tons of medical and relief aid via Egypt's Al-Arish port in February 2024.[178]

Meanwhile, representing Indonesia at the ICJ, Minister for Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi criticized Israel, stressing that "No State should be granted a free rein to do anything they want against a weaker State." She stated that "Israel has even been circumventing negotiations through numerous strategic pretexts," while continuing the expansion of settlements, and "consistently obstructing a negotiated two-State solution." She further noted that Israeli governments "have been openly ignoring the calls from the UNSC to settle this issue peacefully and abide by its international obligations."[179]

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto stated at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore that "when needed and when requested by the United Nations, we are prepared to contribute significant peacekeeping forces to maintain and monitor this prospective ceasefire" in GS.[180]

Amid Israeli and Western attempts to hinder UNRWA's support for Palestinian refugees in the GS, Indonesia boosted its contribution by $1.2 million and provided a $2 million grant in response to UNRWA's urgent appeal for April–September 2024.[181]

Furthermore, Indonesia condemned the Israeli Knesset's efforts to restrict the functions of the UNRWA by labeling it a "terrorist organization," stating in July 2024 that "Israel's systematic efforts to dismantle UNRWA are unacceptable and, subsequently, negate the rights of Palestinian refugees to return and to be repatriated to their homes."[182]

Notably, the Indonesian government, which took office in October 2024, immediately condemned "the total blockade and Israeli attacks that have caused

severe hunger and the deaths of countless Palestinian civilians in Northern Gaza." It added, "The attacks targeting healthcare facilities and workers in Northern Gaza, including the Indonesian Hospital, are clear violations of international law, international humanitarian law and fundamental human rights."[183]

At the start of 2025, the Indonesian government and local humanitarian organizations launched a campaign, "Solidarity, Concrete Actions, and New Hope," coordinating efforts across Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia to raise over $200 million during Ramadan for relief and reconstruction in Palestine, especially the GS.[184]

In a humanitarian gesture, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto offered to temporarily host and treat wounded, trauma-affected individuals, and orphans from the GS in Indonesia until their recovery and safe return, directing his Foreign Ministry to coordinate with Palestinian authorities.[185]

Diplomatically, the Indonesian president told the UNGA, "We must never be silent while Palestinians are denied that same justice and legitimacy in this very hall," stressing the need to "stand for all — the strong and the weak." He added that "Indonesia is prepared to deploy 20,000 or even more of our sons and daughters to help secure peace in Gaza or elsewhere, in Ukraine, in Sudan, in Libya, everywhere when the peace needs to be enforced, peace needs to be guarded, we are ready."[186]

Reflecting widespread Indonesian support for the Palestine issue, Indonesia refused to grant visas to Israeli gymnasts, thereby preventing their participation in the 2025 World Artistic Gymnastics Championship held in Jakarta on 19–25/10/2025. Youth and Sports Minister Erick Thohir added, "The government firmly states that it will refrain from any contact with Israel until Israel recognizes the existence of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state."[187]

Fifth: Popular Islamic Responses to the Palestine Issue

The years 2024–2025 marked a critical juncture in the Muslim world. Operation al-Aqsa Flood triggered a profound shock in the collective consciousness and served as a source of inspiration, embodying faith, resilience, sacrifice and steadfastness. Despite fragmentation, division, and the subordination of many societies to territorially bounded regimes, often marked by corruption and alignment with

Western dominance, public engagement with the Palestine issue remained strong. Throughout 2024–2025, thousands of demonstrations, sit-ins, and solidarity events were held in support of Palestine, its people, Jerusalem and the resistance, while calling for support to GS, lifting the blockade, preventing displacement and ending genocide. Selected examples are highlighted below.

In January 2024, demonstrators in Sarajevo called for an end to the genocide in the GS. Safija Tadifi, one of the organizers, stated, "We demand a cease-fire and the end of the genocide. This is the third march we have organized," adding, "We want to organize these marches and show that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina are on the side of the Palestinian people."[188]

During the same month, the Al-Quds International Institute (QII), together with the Global Forum for Moderation, the International Union of Muslim Scholars, the International Arab Centre for Communication and Solidarity, and the Kuala Lumpur Forum For Thought And Civilization, held a conference in Istanbul under the banner "Freedom for Palestine." It condemned Israel's attacks on civilians in the GS and WB and called for a "Freedom and Justice for Palestine" alliance to support Gaza's resilience.[189]

In Kuala Lumpur, where protests persisted throughout Israel's 2024–2025 war, tens of thousands marched in March 2024 in solidarity with the GS. The demonstration reflected Malaysia's ethnic, religious and political diversity, led by Chua Tian Chang, a Malaysian politician of Chinese descent supporting the Palestine issue, alongside Indian minority leaders and heads of various NGOs. Chua affirmed that all parties in Malaysia share four key demands: the immediate and unconditional halt of Israel's military actions to stop the mass killings of Palestinians by Israeli forces; the unrestricted delivery of humanitarian aid to the residents of the GS; accountability for Israel and its political and military leaders for their war crimes; and UN recognition of the State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital.[190]

In Pakistan, the Jamaat-e-Islami organized hundreds of events, including a major demonstration in March 2024 in Islamabad in solidarity with GS, which drew large crowds. The party's leader, Siraj-ul-Haq, took part in the protest. Furthermore, Jamaat-e-Islami leaders also sent messages to the new Pakistani government under Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, urging a firmer Pakistani stance on developments in GS. Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan questioned why Muslim

countries had not acted as South Africa did at the ICJ, linking the Palestine issue to Kashmir: "How can we demand our rights in Kashmir while failing to support the people of Palestine?!."[191]

In the Maldives, a solidarity gesture with the GS featured a banner reading, "We don't want your money with blood on it," accompanied by a link showing footage of Israeli massacres in the GS and signaling a ban on Israeli passport holders. Earlier, demonstrations outside the Maldivian parliament expressed outrage at Israel's attacks, and MP Saud Hussain proposed amending the immigration law to bar Israeli passport holders due to Israel's ongoing inhumane actions.[192]

In Türkiye, hundreds of events were held, including demonstrations in which thousands of citizens gathered in Istanbul and Ankara on 28/4/2024 in solidarity with the Palestinian people and in protest against the Israeli war in the GS, calling for an end to the aggression. Meanwhile, a mass rally in Istanbul's Üsküdar district, on the Asian side of the city, was organized by the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İHH) and the Freedom Flotilla Coalition.[193]

In response to the wave of student protests in the US, thousands of students from across Malaysia held a demonstration in May 2024 outside the US embassy in Kuala Lumpur. Protesters condemned US policy as supportive of Israel's war on the GS. The rally, attended by prominent political figures including former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, called for an immediate ceasefire and affirmed support for the Palestinian people's right to freedom and independence.[194]

In the same context, students at the International University of Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina staged a protest on 16/5/2024 condemning Israel's war on the GS. Demonstrators raised the Palestinian flag and carried placards reading "Ceasefire Now" and "I Stand with Palestine." University President Professor Ahmet Yildirim said the protest was organized "to challenge the silence of many states over what is happening in the GS."[195]

In Bangladesh, a significant wave of demonstrations took place in support of GS. For example, in June 2024, large-scale protests were held in solidarity with the Palestinians of GS, urging their government to recognize the Palestinian state and coordinate with the international community accordingly. They also called for a ban on arms sales to Israel and for the boycott of Israeli goods in local markets.[196] Similarly, on 12/4/2025, more than one million people gathered in Dhaka in one

of the largest pro-GS mobilizations in the country, publicly pledging to boycott products and entities associated with Israel.[197]

In protest against the assassination of Hamas Political Bureau Chief Isma'il Haniyyah, protests erupted in several Iranian cities. Large crowds gathered in Tehran's Palestine Square, chanting against Israel and calling for revenge, while burning Israeli and US flags and raising those of Palestine and Hamas.[198] These demonstrations were part of a wider wave of mobilizations across Iran.

The assassination of Haniyyah by Israel marked a turning point in popular Islamic solidarity across most Muslim countries, with prayers for the soul of the Hamas leader spreading through the cities and towns of the Muslim world, as well as among Muslim communities worldwide. In Indonesia, funeral prayers in absentia (*salat al-gha'ib*) were held for Haniyyah and the Palestinian martyrs in several cities, with official participation. Similarly, in Malaysia, the Prime Minister joined the people in praying for the souls of the martyrs. Funeral prayer in absentia was also held in Pakistan, where the Central Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, Hafiz Naeemur Rehman, addressed attendees, stating that Haniyyah's martyrdom has instilled in a renewed spirit, and if people around the world stand with Hamas today, it is a significant achievement for them."[199]

At the one-year mark of Israel's genocidal war on GS, demonstrations erupted across the Muslim world, from Türkiye to Indonesia and Pakistan. The Pakistan Ulema Council issued a statement, led by Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi and endorsed by some 65 scholars and religious leaders, condemning Israel's blatant human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories and emphasizing that humanity suffers in Palestine, with Israel, as the occupying power, having crossed all moral limits.[200]

In October 2024, cities across Indonesia held vigils and marches marking one year since Operation al-Aqsa Flood and Israel's war on GS. In Jakarta, thousands gathered at the US embassy, responding to a call by the Alliance of Indonesian Defenders of Palestine (ARI-BP), denouncing US financial and military support for Israel, and urging their government, along with Arab and Muslim countries, to strengthen support for the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples.[201]

At the start of 2025, the Indonesian Mosque Council (DMI) launched an initiative to build 100 mosques in the GS to address urgent local needs. Former Vice President of Indonesia and the DMI General Chair Muhammad Jusuf Kalla,

highlighted that over a thousand mosques in the GS had been destroyed by Israel in the past year and a half. He noted that the DMI would begin with 10 semi-permanent mosques, eventually reaching 100, and called on Indonesian worshippers to support the effort through zakat and donations, adding that plans were coordinated with local authorities in the GS.[202]

In Senegal, the Senegal Alliance for the Palestinian Cause organized in April 2025 a solidarity march condemning Israel's genocidal war on GS. Hundreds of demonstrators in Dakar joined, demanding severed diplomatic ties and the expulsion of Israeli diplomats, including the ambassador. During the 2.5-kilometer march, Seydi Gassama, Executive Director of Amnesty International Senegal, urged a boycott of Israeli products, declaring, "What is happening in Gaza concerns us all; our shared humanity is under attack," and stressed that "silence is no longer an option," concluding that "Netanyahu must be held accountable before the International Criminal Court."[203]

Meanwhile, in Türkiye, popular mobilization in support of the Palestine issue continued, as 200 trade unionists from over 40 countries protested, in April 2025, outside the UN Türkiye office in Ankara during the "International Congress on Labor, Digitalization and Social Justice," condemning Israel's genocide in the GS with banners reading: "No to War," "Free Palestine," and "17,954 children and 12,365 women were killed."[204]

In May 2025, the Gaza Tribunal Public Assembly was convened in Sarajevo to examine alleged war crimes committed by Israel in the GS. The initiative was organized by the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF), which brings together 66 member bodies, including 50 national youth organizations and 16 minority Muslim youth organizations. Established for humanitarian and ethical purposes, the people's tribunal was led by Richard Falk, former UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories.[205]

In Iran, Sunni scholars in Kurdistan Province held a large public conference in July 2025 at Quba Mosque, the largest mosque in Sanandaj, the provincial capital. Participants declared that "defensive jihad against Israel…is a religious duty upon the entire Muslim *Ummah*," and described silence or failure to support the GS as "an unforgivable historical betrayal." They added that "the Palestinian resistance, foremost Hamas and the Palestinian mujahidin, will remain a symbol of the *Ummah*'s dignity and its first line of defense."[206]

In India, Muslim leaders held a press conference in New Delhi on 28/7/2025 in support of Palestine. Jamaat-e-Islami Hind President Syed Sadatullah Husaini urged the Indian government to uphold its humanitarian obligations, stand firmly with the oppressed Palestinian people, and raise its voice on their behalf, stressing that these demands extend to the government, companies, and all segments of Indian society.[207]

On 12/10/2025, thousands of Indonesians marched in Jakarta to protest Israel's genocidal war against the Palestinian people in the GS, waving Palestinian flags and chanting in support of Gaza's steadfastness and resistance.[208]

It should be noted that the scale of popular mobilization across the Muslim world during 2024–2025 far exceeded the scope of this report; it therefore highlights only the most significant moments reflecting Muslim peoples' mobilization and solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Sixth: Normalization and Israel's Relations with Muslim Countries

Observers recognize the serious risks that normalization poses to the Palestine issue, especially amid a genocidal war spanning over two years. While Israel was under pressure, especially after Ansar Allah in Yemen disrupted shipping through the Red Sea toward Israel, several Arab and Muslim countries extended notable support. Reports indicate that Azerbaijani oil exports rose by 55% in the first half of 2024, and despite Türkiye's trade ban with Israel, the oil continued to transit the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline to the port of Ceyhan, from where it was shipped to Haifa.[209] In 2025, Israel's imports of Azerbaijani oil via Turkey's Ceyhan port reached a three-year high at 94 thousand barrels per day, up 31% from 2024, making up 46.4% of Israeli oil imports. In this context, Turkey maintained that it does not control the final destination of Azerbaijani oil transported through the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline. It further stated in November 2024 that exporters using Ceyhan "respected its decision to end trade with Israel" and that oil was not being loaded with Israel as the destination. Moreover, Turkey's Energy Ministry, in response to queries, referred to a 2024 statement saying that state-run pipeline operator BOTAŞ was not involved in the sale of Azerbaijani oil.[210]

In contrast, Israel provides Azerbaijan with weapons and military technology. In 2024, for the first time since 2020, Azerbaijani aircraft conducted over twenty cargo flights from Israel's Ovda Airbase, the main hub for arms shipments.[211]

In Azerbaijani-Israeli energy cooperation, the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijani Republic (SOCAR) with Israel's NewMed Energy and British Petroleum (BP) signed an agreement allowing SOCAR to explore oil within Israel, covering roughly 1,700 km² off the northern coasts of the occupied Palestinian territories. In June 2025, SOCAR also expanded its Israeli investments by acquiring a 10% stake in the Tamar gas field.[212]

Later in 2025, Azerbaijan concluded an economic cooperation agreement to import fresh vegetables from Israel. Oren Lavi, Director General of Israel's Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, described the move as opening "a new door for Israeli agriculture on the Modern Silk Road. This is an unprecedented move that expands agricultural exports and constitutes an important growth engine for the Israeli economy." He further noted that the "move could pave the way for similar opportunities in other countries along the route."[213]

Highlighting the strength of Israel-Azerbaijan relations, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced in May 2025 a planned five-day visit to Azerbaijan, which he later cancelled for security reasons, according to Israeli media; the reports also noted that Türkiye had not granted overflight permission for his aircraft. Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesperson Oncu Keceli stated, "The claims that overflight permission was granted to the Israeli Prime Minister's plane are absolutely untrue. No such request has been conveyed to us either."[214]

In November 2024, Israeli President Isaac Herzog cancelled a planned visit to the Azerbaijani capital to attend the 29th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC or COP29). Israel's Channel 12 website cited a statement noting that, "in light of the security assessment and for security reasons," the trip was cancelled. By contrast, the Turkish authorities announced that they had denied Herzog's aircraft permission to traverse Türkiye's airspace en route to Azerbaijan.[215]

On 19/5/2025, Israeli Minister of Defense Israel Katz met Azerbaijani Defense Minister General Zakir Hasanov. According to the "Israel in Arabic" page, the visit aimed to deepen strategic and security ties. Katz also thanked Azerbaijan for mediating between Israel and Türkiye, for its consistent support, and for awarding

Israel 12 points in the Eurovision Song Contest.[216] Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar further noted in January 2026 that bilateral trade increased by about 50% in 2025, exceeding $360 million.[217]

In November 2025, Kazakhstan announced its intention to join the Abraham Accords during a White House dinner held on the sidelines of the second Central Asia + U.S. (C5+1) summit, attended by regional leaders: Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev; Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov; Tajik President Emomali Rahmon; Turkmen President Serdar Berdimuhamedow; and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. In an official statement, the Kazakh government described the anticipated step as "fully consistent with the nature of republic's balanced, constructive, and peaceful foreign policy."[218]

It is worth noting that bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Israel are not new, as they have maintained multifaceted, interest-driven ties since the 1990s.

Between 2024 and 2025, Israel faced significant challenges, especially the need for a steady oil supply to maintain its military operations in the GS. To meet this, it boosted imports from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Nigeria. Data from the Washington-based Attaqa Research Unit show that Azerbaijan's average exports to Israel rose by over 17 thousand barrels per day in the first eight months of 2025, compared with 69 thousand barrels per day in the same period of 2024, reaching 86 thousand barrels per day. Over the same period, Kazakhstan's exports rose from 63 thousand to 66 thousand barrels per day, while Nigeria's increased from 13 thousand to 17 thousand barrels per day, placing it fourth after Gabon.[219]

It appears that Nigerian-Israeli cooperation has not been limited to the economic sphere. In a statement issued by Nigeria's Ministry of Defense, Permanent Secretary Gabriel Tanimu Aduda was reported to have received Israel's ambassador to Nigeria, Michael Freeman, at the Ministry's headquarters in Ship House in Abuja. Ambassador Aduda highlighted the critical need to deepen defense ties in the light of evolving global security challenges. He emphasized the importance of strategic areas such as joint operations, knowledge exchange, and the modernization of defense cooperation. The discussions also included plans to finalize a new bilateral defense agreement aimed at fostering technical collaboration in defense industry development. "The Ministry will engage in strategic initiatives to replicate successful Israeli military cooperation frameworks in Nigeria, thereby enhancing our national defence architecture," Aduda added.[220]

In April 2024, *Yedioth Ahronoth* reported that Indonesia and Israel had reached an understanding whereby Indonesia would normalize relations with Israel in exchange for Israel's approval of its request to join the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), following three months of discreet negotiations between the two countries and the organization. The report noted that OECD membership requires the unanimous approval of all 38 member states, including Israel.[221] Despite these leaks, no agreement was signed in 2024–2025 for Indonesia to join the normalization track. Later, President Joko Widodo emphasized that discussing normalization was inappropriate while Israel continued massacres and the killing of women and children, calling instead for peace, a ceasefire in the GS, and the implementation of a two-state solution.[222]

It is also worth noting that Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, who assumed office in October 2024, stated during a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron that "Indonesia has conveyed that once Israel recognizes the State of Palestine, we are prepared to recognize Israel and establish diplomatic relations."[223]

As for Pakistan, at the official level it has maintained its rejection of normalizing relations with Israel. Nevertheless, Israel has continued its efforts to achieve a breakthrough, particularly as Israel's conduct has come under heightened scrutiny amid the mass killing of the Palestinians in GS. In this context, it sought to improve its image by organizing a familiarization trip for a group of Pakistani influencers, journalists and researchers, to Israel. The 10-member Pakistani delegation's visit was "organized by Sharaka, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting dialogue and coexistence in the Middle East, and was supported by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany," with the aim of introducing the delegation to "the history of Israel and the Jews."[224] The Pakistani Foreign Office reaffirmed that there was no change in the country's position that it did not recognize Israel, adding that officials were gathering information on an alleged visit to Israel by a local delegation of journalists and influencers.[225] Nonetheless, such isolated actions do not reflect the stance of the overwhelming majority of the Pakistani public, which remains supportive of the Palestine issue.

Israel appears keen, for several reasons, to deepen cooperation with Central Asian states as part of a broader strategy to move closer to Iran and surround it with countries cooperating with Israel across the security, military and intelligence

domains. A similar approach is evident in Africa, particularly in states influential in maritime navigation in the Horn of Africa, such as Somalia. In December 2025, Benjamin Netanyahu officially recognized "the Republic of Somaliland as an independent and sovereign state."[226] This reflects Israel's continued strategy of encouraging fragmentation and division, its support for the partition of Somalia, and its efforts to secure a new foothold in the Horn of Africa.

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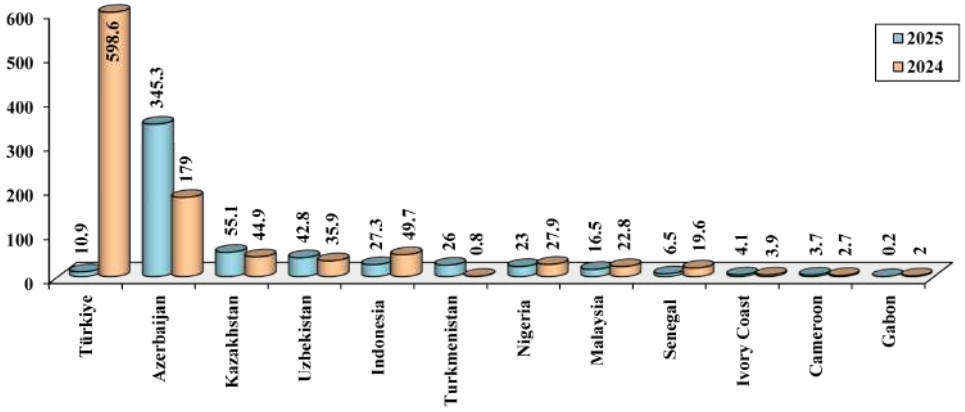
The table below presents Israeli trade volumes with several non-Arab Islamic countries. Türkiye had previously led trade relations with Israel among Muslim countries, until measures taken resulted in the complete suspension of trade in May 2025. Azerbaijan remains among the most active partners, while ten other countries maintain comparatively limited and uneven levels of trade.

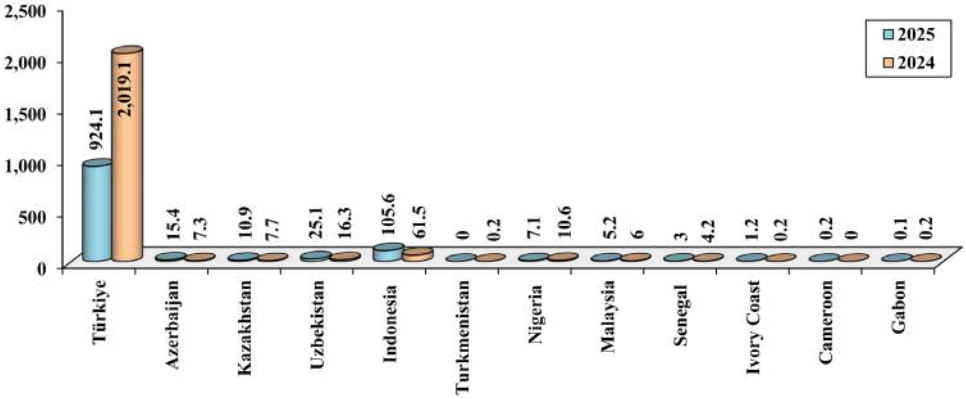
Table 1/7: Israeli Trade Volume with a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries 2023–2025 ($ million)[227]

Country	Israeli exports to:			Israeli imports from:		
	2025	2024	2023	2025	2024	2023
Türkiye	10.9	598.6	1,554.4	924.1	2,019.1	4,607.6
Azerbaijan	345.3	179	239.2	15.4	7.3	3.8
Kazakhstan	55.1	44.9	71.7	10.9	7.7	5.2
Uzbekistan	42.8	35.9	28.8	25.1	16.3	6
Indonesia	27.3	49.7	36.8	105.6	61.5	59.2
Turkmenistan	26	0.8	0.1	0	0.2	0
Nigeria	23	27.9	21.2	7.1	10.6	5.9
Malaysia	16.5	22.8	25.3	5.2	6	10.4
Senegal	6.5	19.6	21.5	3	4.2	5.9
Ivory Coast	4.1	3.9	33.4	1.2	0.2	0.1
Cameroon	3.7	2.7	5.1	0.2	0	0
Gabon	0.2	2	2.5	0.1	0.2	0.4

Israeli Exports to a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries 2024–2025 ($ million)



Israeli Imports From a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries 2024–2025 ($ million)



Conclusion

The OIC's performance has remained largely routine despite the Israeli war on GS, widespread destruction, and attempts at forced displacement. Its level of engagement has fallen short of the expectations of Muslim peoples, with no substantive measures taken regarding GS or ongoing repression and Judaization policies in Jerusalem and WB. Most of its activity has been limited to issuing statements of condemnation and denunciation of Israeli aggressions.

As for Türkiye, Operation al-Aqsa Flood came at a politically sensitive moment, particularly given its expanding relations with Israel. However, this initial unease soon shifted as the scale of the war and widespread massacres became clearer, alongside growing Turkish public sympathy. Ankara then reverted to its earlier stance, supporting the Palestinian narrative and condemning Israeli war crimes. In this context, Ankara provided Hamas with significant political cover, rejecting its designation as a "terrorist" organization and framing it as a legitimate resistance movement. This position was articulated by President Erdoğan himself, who drew parallels with the Turkish War of Independence. He further portrayed Hamas as a defensive front not only for Palestinian territories, but also, symbolically, for Anatolia (Turkish lands) and, more broadly, for the wider Muslim world.

The meetings between the Turkish leadership and Hamas during the war were marked by two main features. First, they went beyond the security dimension to the political level, involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as direct meetings with President Erdoğan. Second, their number and frequency increased markedly, reaching 15 officially announced meetings, an unprecedented level compared to any previous phase in bilateral relations. At the rhetorical level, the Turkish leadership adopted a strongly condemnatory stance toward the Israeli offensive. President Erdoğan called for issuing a recommendation to use force if diplomatic efforts failed to compel Israel to halt the war. Over time, Ankara's discourse shifted from criticizing Netanyahu and comparing him to Hitler, to condemning Israel as a "state," describing it as a "terrorist state." Türkiye also maintained its rejection of Israeli policies in Jerusalem and the rest of WB. In the final months of the war, Türkiye became more deeply involved in mediation and negotiation efforts, particularly regarding Hamas and other Palestinian factions.

In the near term, Türkiye is expected to remain part of the four-party guarantor framework of the ceasefire in GS (alongside Qatar, Egypt and the US). It will also pursue closer ties with Washington, which may help soften Israel's position regarding its participation in the ISF. Türkiye's relations with the Palestinian side, particularly Hamas, are likely to continue on a similar trajectory into 2026, alongside efforts to secure a greater role in arrangements related to GS. By contrast, relations with Israel are not expected to improve in the foreseeable future, especially as long as Netanyahu remains in power.

As for Iran, it has maintained its principled position in support of the Palestinian people and their armed resistance, while continuing to reject recognition of Israel.

In the context of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, Iran was aware of the risks associated with its stance; nonetheless, it sought to avoid escalation into a direct military confrontation that Israel was attempting to provoke, in line with what has been described as "strategic patience." However, Iran ultimately responded to Israeli attacks on its territory and allies. It carried out strikes on targets in Israel on 13/4/2024 and 1/10/2024, in retaliation for the assassinations of Isma'il Haniyyah, Hasan Nasrallah, and Abbas Nilforoushan. It later fought a 12-day war following Israel's surprise attack on 13/6/2025, and subsequently became involved in a broader confrontation amid the Israeli-US escalation that began in late February 2026 and continued at the time of writing. Looking ahead, Iran is expected to maintain its commitment to Palestine while focusing, together with other resistance actors, on rebuilding its capabilities and drawing on the lessons of the war.

On the other hand, several major Muslim countries, including Malaysia, Indonesia and Pakistan, have maintained their established policies on the Palestine issue.

At the level of public opinion, Muslim peoples have shown sustained engagement with the Palestine issue, which remains a central point of consensus. Operation al-Aqsa Flood constituted a major emotional and symbolic shock in the Muslim world conscience, while also serving as a source of inspiration through its associations with faith, resilience, sacrifice and steadfastness. Despite fragmentation and internal divisions of these Muslim countries, many of which are marked by corruption and subordination to Western hegemony, thousands of demonstrations, sit-ins, and public events were organized in support of Palestine and its people, as well as Jerusalem and the resistance. These mobilizations called for support for GS, lifting the blockade, preventing displacement, and ending the genocide during 2024–2025, with several reaching very large scales, including "million-person" rallies.

As for normalization with Israel, it has faced significant setbacks following Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the offensive on GS. Türkiye, once the leading Islamic trade partner with Israel, saw bilateral trade come to a complete halt in May 2025. In contrast, economic ties between Israel and Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have strengthened, while Kazakhstan announced in November 2025 its intention to join the Abraham Accords. However, the extensive devastation resulting from Israel's offensives in GS, Lebanon and Iran, alongside its assertive regional posture and continued actions in Jerusalem and against holy sites, remain key obstacles to any meaningful normalization process.

Endnotes

[1] WAFA, 26/1/2024. (in Arabic)

[2] WAFA, 28/1/2024. (in Arabic)

[3] Arabi21, 6/3/2024.

[4] *Asharq al-Awsat*, 5/5/2024. (in Arabic)

[5] Ariel Grossman, Israel And UAE Ink New Deal To Connect Ports Via Land Bridge, site of NoCamels, 7/12/2023, https://nocamels.com/2023/12/israel-and-uae-ink-new-deal-to-connectports-via-land-bridge/

[6] OIC, 7/8/2024.

[7] *Asharq al-Awsat*, 29/9/2024. (in Arabic)

[8] OIC, 5/2/2025.

[9] *Al-'Arabi al-Jadid*, 7/3/2025. See also OIC, 8/3/2025.

[10] Joint Statement on Developments in the Gaza Strip, OIC, 9/8/2025, https://new.oic-oci.org/SitePages/NewsDetail.aspx?Item=2937

[11] OIC, 15/9/2025, https://new.oic-oci.org/SitePages/NewsDetail.aspx?Item=3015

[12] OIC, 9/10/2025, https://new.oic-oci.org/SitePages/NewsDetail.aspx?Item=3066

[13] Turkish House or *Türkevi* Center is an official Turkish headquarters in New York where the president and senior officials hold diplomatic meetings and host formal events.

[14] Aljazeera.net, 20/9/2023. (in Arabic)

[15] Anadolu Agency, 9/3/2024. (in Arabic)

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Chapter Eight

The Palestine Issue and the International Situation

The Palestine Issue and the International Situation

Introduction

Operation al-Aqsa Flood on 7/10/2023 emerged as a pivotal moment shaping regional and international dynamics throughout 2024 and 2025. The ramifications of this strategic event reverberated across the international system, engaging the major global powers, most notably the US, Russia, China, and the EU, alongside intergovernmental international organizations, particularly the UN and its affiliated legal bodies, such as the ICJ, humanitarian institutions including the Human Rights Council (HRC), WHO and FAO, and political organs, notably UNSC and UNGA. These processes were further influenced by the recommendations of the ICC, as well as by the positions adopted by regional organizations across diverse geopolitical arenas and by international non-governmental organizations active in humanitarian work, such as Amnesty International, in addition to media and professional organizations, particularly those concerned with journalists. Beyond institutional and diplomatic arenas, Operation al-Aqsa Flood also left a profound imprint on global public opinion. It not only visibly undermined Israel's international standing but also laid bare the constructed nature of its self-image. Collectively, these developments have catalyzed significant shifts in international public attitudes toward what is increasingly perceived as the final manifestation of settler colonialism in the contemporary world.

This suggests that the repercussions of Operation al-Aqsa Flood will remain prominent across the short, medium and long term. However, while certain repercussions are likely to exert more profound and lasting effects than others, their form and intensity will evolve in response to the changing conditions of the international system. Accordingly, sustained attention to international interactions, both within and beyond the Middle East, cannot be disregarded, as these dynamics reinforce the Cobweb network model that currently prevails in contemporary theories of international relations.

First: UN

The UN's engagement with Operation al-Aqsa Flood and its repercussions commenced only days after the outbreak of the confrontation between the Palestinian resistance and the Israeli army. The organization's first formal decision was adopted by the UNGA on 27/10/2023, approximately three weeks after the operation began, calling for a humanitarian truce as a step toward halting the fighting. The resolution was supported by 120 states, opposed by 14, while 45 states abstained.[1]

Subsequently, the UN maintained sustained engagement with developments in the war on GS throughout 2024 and 2025. These UN-level activities may be outlined as follows:

1. UNGA

In December 2024, the UNGA adopted a resolution affirming several strategic priorities, foremost among them support for the two-state solution, the designation of Israeli settlements in both the WB and the Golan as illegal, and the urgent need for a ceasefire in GS, alongside the facilitation of humanitarian assistance into the Strip. The resolution was supported by 157 states, opposed by 8, including the US and Israel.[2]

Subsequently, on 12/6/2025, the UNGA adopted another resolution calling on Israel to "immediately end the blockade, open all border crossings and ensure that aid reaches the Palestinian civilian population throughout the Gaza Strip immediately and at scale." The resolution passed with a majority of 149 votes in favor, 12 against, and 19 abstentions.[3]

The UNGA had adopted a series of resolutions and statements during special sessions dedicated to discussing the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, namely:[4]

a. On 10/5/2024, it overwhelmingly endorsed Palestine's membership in the UN, and urged the UNSC to support its efforts.

b. On 18/9/2024, the UNGA overwhelmingly adopted historic text demanding Israel end its unlawful presence and its policies in GS and WB within one year.

c. On 4/12/2024, the UNGA resumed its tenth emergency special session on illegal Israeli actions in Occupied Jerusalem and the rest of the GS and WB, where

the delegates underscored the urgent need to put an end to the conflict and for measures to contain the civilian population's suffering.

d. On 11/12/2024, the UNGA demanded an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire in GS, reiterated its demand for the immediate release of all hostages and demanded that Israel allow UNRWA to proceed with its aid operations without restriction in GS and WB.

The New York Declaration issued by the UNGA on 12/9/2025, following a joint French-Saudi initiative, endorsing the two-state solution, represented a further indication of Israel's growing isolation. The resolution was supported by 142 states, opposed by 10, including the US, Israel, Argentina, Hungary, Paraguay, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea and Tonga, while 12 states abstained from voting.[5]

2. UNSC

Between March and June 2024, the UNSC adopted two resolutions. The first, on 25/3/2024, "demanded an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire. It also demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages." The resolution was adopted with 14 votes in favor and one abstention (US). The second resolution, on 10/6/2024, welcomed the ceasefire proposal announced by US President Joe Biden on 31/5/2024 and was adopted with 14 votes in favor and one abstention (Russia).[6]

Earlier, on 22/12/2023, the UNSC had adopted a resolution the Secretary-General to appoint a Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator tasked with establishing a UN mechanism for accelerating humanitarian consignments to Gaza. It was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (Russia and the US).[7]

On 4/6/2025, the representative of Slovenia, on behalf of the ten non-permanent members of the Council, submitted a proposal calling for a ceasefire, the release of all hostages and the lifting of all restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza. However, it was defeated by a vote of 14 in favor to 1 against (US), with no abstentions. The US delegation justified its position stating, "Any product that undermines our close ally Israel's security is a non-starter."[8]

On 18/9/2025, 14 members of the UNSC voted in favor of a draft resolution calling for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in GS, "the release of

all hostages held by Hamas and for Israel to lift all restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid and ensure that it is safely distributed to the population – in particular by UN agencies and partners." Nevertheless, the US exercised its veto to block the resolution, despite the unanimous support of the other members.[9]

What further underscores the US determination to defy the international consensus in the UNSC are its objections to proposals regarding the humanitarian aid mechanism for GS. Israel and the US advanced a plan coordinated by a new private entity called the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) that would bypass the existing delivery architecture run by the UN and its humanitarian partners. The GHF began delivering aid at designated distribution sites secured by US contractors and the Israeli army. The UN and its partners refused to participate in the mechanism, because it "does not adhere to humanitarian principles and does not replicate the scale or accessibility of existing aid delivery channels." The situation on the ground validated the UN's concerns, once the (US-Israeli) mechanism began operating on 27/5/2025, several security incidents near GHF sites led to significant civilian casualties. Dozens of Palestinians were reportedly killed or injured while seeking aid from a distribution site, consequently, the Secretary-General condemned the incidents and called for "an immediate and independent investigation into these events and for perpetrators to be held accountable."

This was followed by separate initiatives from three UNSC member states, Algeria, France and Slovenia. After informal consultations, they agreed that Algeria and Slovenia, along with Guyana, would introduce a single draft resolution calling for "an immediate, unconditional, and permanent ceasefire in Gaza; the immediate, dignified, and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and other groups; and the immediate and unconditional lifting of all restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza and its safe and unhindered distribution at scale." However, "the US expressed reservations about the draft and made several proposals that it considered prerequisites for further engagement, including a condemnation of Hamas," which was supported by France and the UK. The US ultimately exercised its veto against the draft, marking its fifth veto during Operation al-Aqsa Flood.[10]

On 17/11/2025, relying on Trump's plan to halt the fighting in GS (discussed further below), the UNSC approved the proposal with 13 members voting in favor, while Russia and China abstained. The plan stipulated:[11]

The UNSC, "Welcoming the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict of 29 September 2025,"

a. "calls on all parties to implement it in its entirety, including maintenance of the ceasefire."

b. "Welcomes the establishment of the Board of Peace (BoP) as a transitional administration with international legal personality that will set the framework, and coordinate funding for, the redevelopment of Gaza pursuant to the Comprehensive Plan, and in a manner consistent with relevant international legal principles, until such time as the Palestinian Authority (PA) has satisfactorily completed its reform program, as outlined in various proposals, including President Trump's peace plan in 2020 and the Saudi-French Proposal, and can securely and effectively take back control of Gaza. After the PA reform program is faithfully carried out and Gaza redevelopment has advanced, the conditions may finally be in place for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood."

c. "Underscores the importance of the full resumption of humanitarian aid in cooperation with the BoP into the Gaza Strip in a manner consistent with relevant international legal principles and through cooperating organizations, including the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Red Crescent, and ensuring such aid is used solely for peaceful uses and not diverted by armed groups."

d. Authorizes Member States participating in the BoP to establish operational entities for the performance of its functions, including: (1) "the implementation of a transitional governance administration, including the supervising and supporting of a Palestinian technocratic, apolitical committee of competent Palestinians from the Strip, as championed by the Arab League, which shall be responsible for day-to-day operations of Gaza's civil service and administration; (2) the reconstruction of Gaza and of economic recovery programs; (3) the coordination and supporting of and delivery of public services and humanitarian assistance in Gaza; (4) any measures to facilitate the movement of persons in and out of Gaza, in a manner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan."

e. "Calls upon the World Bank and other financial institutions to facilitate and provide financial resources to support the reconstruction and development of

Gaza, including through the establishment of a dedicated trust fund for this purpose and governed by donors."

f. "Authorizes Member States working with the BoP and the BoP to establish a temporary International Stabilization Force (ISF) in Gaza to deploy under unified command acceptable to the BoP, with forces contributed by participating States, in close consultation and cooperation with the Arab Republic of Egypt and the State of Israel, and to use all necessary measures to carry out its mandate consistent with international law, including international humanitarian law. The ISF shall work with Israel and Egypt, without prejudice to their existing agreements, along with the newly trained and vetted Palestinian police force, to help secure border areas; stabilize the security environment in Gaza by ensuring the process of demilitarizing the Gaza Strip, including the destruction and prevention of rebuilding of the military, terror, and offensive infrastructure."

3. UN Conference 28–30/7/2025

At the invitation of France and Saudi Arabia, an international conference was convened under the auspices of the UN, demanding:[12]

a. From Israel: A full ceasefire in Gaza; the withdrawal of the Israeli army; lifting the GS blockade; releasing Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the hostages held by Hamas; "a commitment to establishing a sovereign, contiguous, independent, and viable Palestinian state; halting all illegal Israeli settlement activity and committing to stop future construction; refraining from unilateral actions (like annexation) that undermine the two-state solution; ensuring access to holy sites in Jerusalem and preserving the status quo; adhering to international law and the UN Security Council resolutions; fully cooperating with UN bodies and the international community, including support for inspection and enforcement mechanisms; and assisting in humanitarian efforts and economic reconstruction in Gaza and the West Bank."

b. From the Palestinians: The "recognition of Israel and a commitment to the two-state solution and peace; establishing full PA control over all Palestinian territories under a unified governance framework (as emphasized repeatedly by PA President Mahmoud Abbas: (one state, one government, one law, and one weapon)); ending all violence and incitement against Israel; preventing terrorism and extremism in all forms; implementing political and economic reforms to

build a stable and functional state; holding transparent and democratic elections; and upholding human rights, gender equality, and inclusion of all segments of Palestinian society in both political and economic processes."

c. Transitional measures prior to the implementation of the final solution, such as eliminating any scenario where Hamas remains in power in GS; deploying an Arab/ international force to stabilize the security situation in GS; conducting a systematic and monitored disarmament of militias, reintegrating their members into legitimate civilian and institutional frameworks, and rehabilitating and developing effective non-Hamas Palestinian security forces. Furthermore, leading a comprehensive reconstruction plan for GS with international support and providing immediate humanitarian aid to its population.

4. UN Agencies Operating in the WB and GS

According to a UN statement, 13 UN entities are present in GS. Between October 2023 and early May 2025, a total of 295 UN personnel were killed in GS. In December 2024, the UNGA voted, by a majority of 137 in favor and 12 against (including the US), to request that the ICJ assess the extent of Israel's compliance with its obligations to ensure secure conditions for the operation of these UN agencies and bodies in areas under occupation and to protect civilians.[13]

Given the extreme severity of living conditions in GS, the UN specialized agencies issued a joint statement on 12/7/2025 detailing the various dimensions of the crisis, with particular emphasis on the acute fuel shortage and its cascading impact across all aspects of daily life. Issued by OCHA, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UNRWA, the World Food Programme (WFP), and WHO, the statement warned that the fuel shortage has become a direct driver of the collapse of basic living conditions and poses a serious risk of forcing these agencies to suspend the humanitarian operations entrusted to them by the international community.[14]

These positions align with the appeal issued on 10/4/2024 by the UN Special Rapporteur on Palestine, Francesca Albanese, calling on the EU to "suspend its trade and institutional ties with Israel to deter war crimes that amount to genocide

in the Gaza Strip." She likewise endorsed the initiative advanced by Ireland and Spain to review the EU-Israel Association Agreement, noting that, under the prevailing circumstances, Israel has "no incentive whatsoever to change conduct."[15] Furthermore, Albanese issued a series of communications urging other states to pressure Israel, including through sanctions, to end its deadly bombardment of GS. She has also been a strong supporter of the ICC's arrest warrants against Israeli officials, including Netanyahu, for allegations of war crimes. She issued a report naming several large US companies as among those aiding what she described as Israel's occupation and war on GS.[16]

A report by UNRWA highlights the significant challenges it faces in delivering services to the Palestinian community. Chief among these challenges, according to the report, are:[17]

a. All UNRWA international staff are banned from entering GS. This follows the passage of two laws by Israel's Knesset, on 28/10/2024, that prohibit UNRWA's operations in WB and GS and bar any contact between Israeli officials with UNRWA.

b. In January 2026, there were 117 UNRWA facilities located within the Israeli militarized zone behind the so-called "Yellow Line" and in areas where access is subject to Israeli approval/coordination.

c. The Israeli Authorities, since March 2025 and until 7/1/2026, have been blocking UNRWA from directly bringing humanitarian personnel and aid into the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, pre-positioned outside Gaza, UNRWA has enough food parcels, flour, and shelter supplies for hundreds of thousands of people. It is worth noting that before that Israel had been obstructing aid delivery operations. For instance, of the 84 planned aid movements coordinated with Israeli authorities across GS between 1–8/7/2025, 53 were obstructed, accounting for 63% of the agency's total activities.

d. As of 30/12/2025, 955 incidents impacting UNRWA premises and the people inside them have been reported since the beginning of the war.

e. Since the war began on 7/10/2023 and until 5/1/2026, UNRWA has recorded 382 colleagues killed in Gaza since the war began (309 UNRWA personnel, in addition to 73 persons who were supporting UNRWA activities).

5. The ICJ

The ICJ serves as the judicial arm of the UN, a role that the government of South Africa (followed by other states) sought to leverage by filing a case against Israel for committing genocide in GS. The Court also considered complaints from UN agencies regarding the restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities on their operations in the WB and GS.

The ICJ has issued advisory opinions on each of these cases as follows:

a. On 29/12/2023, South Africa filed a case against Israel,[18] accusing it of committing inhumane acts that could constitute "genocide." The court accepted the case, noting that "at least some of the acts and omissions alleged by South Africa to have been committed by Israel in Gaza appear to be capable of falling within the provisions of the Convention." This indicates that the allegations of genocidal acts had sufficient basis for consideration, though, from the court's perspective, the matter remains connected to Israel. In the preamble to its ruling on 26/1/2024, the court concluded "that South Africa has standing to submit to it the dispute with Israel concerning alleged violations of obligations under the Genocide Convention."

In the Court's view, the facts and circumstances mentioned above are sufficient to conclude that at least some of the rights claimed by South Africa and for which it is seeking protection are plausible. This is the case with respect to the right of the Palestinians in Gaza to be protected from acts of genocide and related prohibited acts identified in Article III, and the right of South Africa to seek Israel's compliance with the latter's obligations under the Convention.

The court's ruling demanded the following:

1. "Israel must, in accordance with its obligations under the Genocide Convention, in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts within the scope of Article II of this Convention, in particular:
   a. killing members of the group;
   b. causing serious bodily or mental harm to the members of the group;
   c. deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; and
   d. imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group."

2. "The Court is also of the view that Israel must take all measures within its power to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide in relation to members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip."
3. "The Court further considers that Israel must take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip."
4. "Israel must also take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to allegations of acts within the scope of Article II and Article III of the Genocide Convention against members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip."
5. "The Court considers that Israel must submit a report to the Court on all measures taken to give effect to this Order within one month, as from the date of this Order."
6. The Court "is gravely concerned about the fate of the hostages abducted during the attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 and held since then by Hamas and other armed groups, and calls for their immediate and unconditional release."

b. On 24/5/2024, the ICJ issued a series of provisional measures concerning GS, including an order requiring Israel to "immediately halt its military offensive, and any other action in the Rafah Governorate," characterizing the humanitarian situation in GS as "catastrophic."[19]

c. On 19/7/2024, the ICJ gave "its Advisory Opinion in respect of the Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem." It concluded that:[20]

1. "The State of Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is unlawful; the State of Israel is under an obligation to bring to an end its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as rapidly as possible."
2. "The State of Israel is under an obligation to cease immediately all new settlement activities, and to evacuate all settlers from the Occupied Palestinian Territory;
3. "The State of Israel has the obligation to make reparation for the damage caused to all the natural or legal persons concerned in the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

4. "All States are under an obligation not to recognize as legal the situation arising from the unlawful presence of the State of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by the continued presence of the State of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory."
5. "International organizations, including the United Nations, are under an obligation not to recognize as legal the situation arising from the unlawful presence of the State of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; and the United Nations, and especially the General Assembly, which requested the opinion, and the Security Council, should consider the precise modalities and further action required to bring to an end as rapidly as possible the unlawful presence of the State of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

d. Continuing its activities, the ICJ issued an advisory opinion on 22/10/2025, which, while non-binding, stated that "As an occupying Power, Israel is obliged to ensure the basic needs of the local population, including the supplies essential for their survival... These obligations… must be read in conjunction with Article 59 in considering Israel's obligations in relation to the activities of the United Nations, other international organizations and third States." It further noted in its opinion that "there is no evidence that UNRWA, as an entity, breached the principle of impartiality," and that Israel must support the relief work carried out by the agency. The UNGA had requested this opinion in December 2024, following Israel's enactment of laws prohibiting UNRWA's operations in the country. In delivering the opinion, the court's president, Japanese judge Yuji Iwasawa, stated: "the occupying Power may never invoke reasons of security to justify the general suspension of all humanitarian activities in an occupied territory," and emphasized that Israel is obliged to ensure that the basic needs of civilians in GS are met. The court also noted that "Israel has not substantiated its allegations that a significant part of UNRWA employees 'are members of Hamas . . . or other terrorist factions.'" Additionally, Judge Iwasawa criticized the US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which Israel had promoted as an alternative to certain UNRWA activities.[21]

6. HRC

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, which was established on 27/5/2021 by the HRC, and as an independent investigative body of the UN with the mandate to investigate international crimes, considered it important that it make an assessment of Israel's responsibility under the Genocide Convention, and provide its recommendations in relation to Israel. On 16/9/2025, it concluded that "the State of Israel bears responsibility for the failure to prevent genocide, the commission of genocide and the failure to punish genocide against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip." These findings are consistent with the conclusions reached by other genocide experts and international human rights organizations.[22]

It is clear that UN actions have generally aligned with Palestinian demands, a pattern expected to persist in the foreseeable future.

Second: Regional and International Intergovernmental Organizations

Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) play a significant role in the international arena, with their number now exceeding 300.[23] Among those most directly engaged with the Palestine issue, the following stand out:

1. ICC

The ICC was established as an IGO in July 2002 and operates independently of the UN. Its jurisdiction extends to the criminal responsibility of individuals rather than states. As of 2024, 125 countries have signed the Rome Statute, of which 114 have ratified it; neither the US nor Israel are members. The court's mandate encompasses war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity, aggression, and related offenses.

On 17/11/2023, the ICC received a further referral of the Situation in the State of Palestine, from South Africa, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Comoros and Djibouti. On 21/11/2024, ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I also issued two decisions:[24]

a. While rejecting challenges by the State of Israel brought under articles 18 and 19 of the Rome Statute, it issued warrants of arrest for Benjamin Netanyahu

and Yoav Gallant for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed from at least 8/10/2023 until at least 20/5/2024. Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel at the time of the relevant conduct, and Gallant, Minister of Defense of Israel at the time of the alleged conduct, are suspected of the war crimes of starvation as a method of warfare and of intentionally directing an attack against the civilian population; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts.

b. It unanimously issued a warrant of arrest for Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri, commonly known as "Daif," "for alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes committed on the territory of the State of Israel and the State of Palestine from at least 7 October 2023." Furthermore, the Prosecution had initially filed applications for warrants of arrest for two other senior leaders of Hamas, namely Isma'il Haniyyah and Yahya Sinwar. Following confirmation of their deaths, the Chamber granted the withdrawal of the three warrants in August and October 2024, and February 2025.

2. The EU

The mega-trend of the European stance on Operation al-Aqsa Flood can be summarized as follows:[25]

a. On 15/10/2023, the EU condemned the "brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks" of the Palestinian resistance attack on 7 October. It emphasized Israel's right to defend itself while reiterating "the importance to ensure the protection of all civilians at all times." The statement also called on the Palestinian resistance to "immediately release all hostages without any precondition," reiterated "the importance of the provision of urgent humanitarian aid" and stated that the EU countries "stand ready to continue supporting those civilians most in need in Gaza."

b. In the first month after the launch of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, heads of state and government from most European countries traveled to Israel. Between 13/10/2023 and the end of that month, ten presidents or prime ministers paid solidarity visits, including European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. A further six presidents or prime ministers from EU member states visited Israel in November 2023, all to express support and sympathy for Israel.

c. A reaffirmation of Europe's commitment to the the two-state solution, pursued through cooperation between the legitimate PA and the wider international community, in order to prevent further regional escalation.

d. Some divergence emerged among EU officials, particularly those closely involved in foreign policy, with the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, taking a clearer stance than the Commission President, especially in criticizing Israel's violations of international law and its policies toward civilians. This divergence was particularly evident regarding the EU free trade pact with Israel, where member states were split over calls to suspend the agreement at the meeting on 30/8/2025. "We are divided about this issue," Kaja Kallas, the EU's foreign policy chief said, highlighting disagreements over Israel's access to an EU research-funding program. Deliberations showed that "Ireland, Spain, Sweden and the Netherlands have called for the suspension of an EU free trade pact with Israel. But traditional allies of Israel, such as Germany, Hungary and the Czech Republic, have rejected such steps." German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul justified Germany's stance by noting that research funding issues are unrelated to the war in GS, especially since Germany "had suspended delivery of weapons that could be used in Gaza." The matter is further complicated by the EU's position as Israel's biggest trading partner, with trade in goods between the two amounting to $49.9 billion by the end of 2024.

   It is important to note that the EU Commission officials clarified that suspending EU research-funding does not require unanimity. Instead, support from 15 out of the 27 countries would be enough if they represent 65% of the EU population.

e. In August 2025, the foreign ministers of France, Luxembourg and Belgium condemned the US decision to suspend UN entry visas for Palestinian officials, including the President of the PA and its representatives.

f. Following Israel's allegations that some UNRWA staff were involved in "terrorist" activities, European responses diverged as follows:[26]

   - Temporary suspension of UNRWA funding by Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Italy, Austria, Finland, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. However, all of these countries subsequently reversed their decisions, with the exception of Sweden and Netherlands.

- Increased contributions to UNRWA's budget by EU member states including Spain, Portugal and Ireland.
- Continuation of contributions without suspension by France, Denmark, Spain, Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway and Slovenia.

However, the EU resumed its contributions to UNRWA's budget in early March 2024 and even increased them, after some member states had temporarily suspended funding pending investigations into certain UNRWA staff. On 29/1/2024, Josep Borrell, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, informed UN Secretary-General António Guterres that funding had not been suspended and that "EU will determine upcoming funding decisions in light of the outcome of the investigation." In late January, he reaffirmed, "we shouldn't let allegations cloud UNRWA's indispensable and great work."[27] Consequently, the EU chose not to wait for the investigation's results and approved €275 million ($297 million) in aid to the Palestinian population in GS and across the region for 2024, of which €82 million ($89 million) of aid will be delivered through UNRWA, €125 million ($135 million) will support humanitarian aid to Palestinians, also implemented by UNRWA, and €68 million ($74 million) will be allocated through international partners such as the Red Cross and the Red Crescent.[28]

At the same time, the EU reached an agreement with UNRWA to conduct an investigation led by external experts appointed by the EU. On 29/1/2024, Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares stated, "We will not modify our relationship with UNRWA, although we are closely following the internal investigation and the result it may yield for the acts of a dozen people" in an organization that has "30,000 workers." According to Albares, UNRWA is "an indispensable body in order to alleviate the tremendous humanitarian situation in Gaza." On the same day, Spanish Minister of Social Affairs Pablo Bustinduy described the suspension of UNRWA funding by other Western countries as "an unjustified operation of collective punishment against the Palestinian people."[29]

g. European countries, both individually and collectively through the EU, condemned the "Operation True Promise 1" carried out by Iran against Israel in April 2024. The EU deemed the attack unacceptable and regarded it as an escalation that endangers regional security.

The mega-trend in Europe indicates a gradual shift toward a less pro-Israel stance, particularly among the major European powers, Germany, the UK, France,

Italy and Spain, as well as other European states. This trend was evident in European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's call in September 2025 to "suspend trade-related provisions of the EU–Israel Association Agreement" and to impose sanctions on two far-right Israeli ministers (Ben-Gvir and Smotrich). She also highlighted "Europe's 'painful' inability to respond to the war on Gaza and the ensuing humanitarian disaster." Implementing these measures, however, would require the support of at least 15 member states, while sanctioning the two ministers demands unanimity, making the latter measure unlikely to succeed.[30]

The increasing European support for the "two-state solution" has raised concerns in Israel. The European Commission President emphasized this in her condemnation of Israel, where she "criticized plans for illegal settlements that would split the occupied West Bank in half, as well as incitement of violence by extremist Israeli ministers, as a 'clear attempt to undermine the two-state solution.'" Furthermore, in the aftermath of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, four European states recognized the State of Palestine. However, this trajectory gained additional momentum following Israel's attack on Qatar on 10/9/2025, after which eight more European states extended recognition. Nonetheless, countries such as Hungary and Germany represent a less supportive stance toward efforts to curb Israeli policies.[31]

Israel sensed a shift in Europe's stance. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar voiced his dissatisfaction with the European Commission's position on free trade between Israel and Europe, accusing the EU Commission President of "echo[ing] the false propaganda of Hamas and its partners."[32]

The most notable shifts in the European position, as represented by the EU, are as follows:[33]

- A transition from mere verbal criticism to discussions of trade and arms sanctions.
- Increased support in the UN for draft resolutions opposed by Israel.
- Growing European consensus in favor of granting Palestine full UN membership.
- A reversal of the stance on UNRWA funding, moving from proposed cuts to increased support.
- Acceptance by some European states of the rulings of the ICC and ICJ.
- Criticism of Israel's attack on Qatar under the pretext of targeting Hamas leadership.

- European discourse has increasingly criticized Israel for rejecting the two-state solution, continuing settlement construction, and disregarding international and humanitarian law. This stance was clearly reflected in September 2025, when nearly all European countries, particularly the central powers of Germany, the UK, France, Italy, Spain and Greece, endorsed the two-state solution at the UNGA , despite opposition from the US and Israel.[34]

There is a noticeable shift in the European stance toward actions contrary to Israel's position. Yet, this shift remains limited in effect, largely symbolic, or expressed through diplomatic reproach, and it also undermines the "unity of the European position."

3. The African Union

African states appeared split regarding the war in GS specifically, and the Palestine issue more generally. They can be categorized into three groups:

a. The group most supportive of Palestine comprises South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Their stance is reflected in official statements and voting behavior at the UN and the African Union, and can be summarized as follows:[35]

- Supporting the two-state solution based on the 1967 borders.
- Condemning Israeli violence in the occupied territories, particularly in GS.
- Repeatedly calling on Israel to comply with international law.
- Stressing the need for a lasting ceasefire in GS.
- Backing international efforts to provide food and medical aid to Palestinians in GS and condemning Israeli killings of civilians seeking such assistance.
- Rejecting unilateral measures taken by Israel.
- Supporting international judicial bodies, particularly the ICC and ICJ, in their engagement with the Palestine issue, and emphasizing the obligation on Israel to respond to their rulings and requests.
- Calling for de-escalation in the Middle East following the US and Israeli attack on Iran, given the serious risks it poses to international peace and security.
- Calling for the preservation of UNRWA and for the facilitation of its work.
- Reaffirming the need for Israel to withdraw from the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, the Golan Heights and the occupied areas of southern Lebanon.

b. The second group is the most supportive of Israel. It is led by Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The positions of this group largely diverge from those of the first group across most of the issues outlined above.

c. The third group consists of the "hesitant" states. These countries tend to avoid engagement in debates surrounding the Arab-Israeli conflict or the adoption of clear positions. While they generally incline toward accepting the idea of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, they are careful to develop relations with Israel in ways that do not provoke the Arab side. Key states in this group include Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Guinea-Bissau and Ethiopia.

The importance of African states goes beyond economic and strategic dimensions. Collectively, they form a substantial voting bloc in the UN, representing around 28% of the total votes. A review of voting in the UNGA on resolutions related to the war in GS shows that, with the exception of Liberia, no African state voted against resolutions calling for a ceasefire, the declaration of a humanitarian truce, or the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Strip.[36]

4. BRICS

Since the launch of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, BRICS, which initially comprised Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa and later expanded to include 10 members alongside 9 partner countries, has issued two statements on the war in GS. The first was released in October 2024 and stated:[37]

a. "We reiterate our grave concern at the deterioration of the situation and humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular the unprecedented escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip and in West Bank as a result of the Israeli military offensive, which led to mass killing and injury of civilians, forced displacement and widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure."

b. "We stress the urgent need for an immediate, comprehensive and permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and detainees from both sides who are being illegally held captive."

c. "The unhindered sustainable and at scale supply of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, and cessation of all aggressive actions."

d. "We denounce the Israeli attacks against humanitarian operations, facilities, personnel and distribution points."

e. "We acknowledge the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice in the legal proceedings instituted by South Africa against Israel."

f. "We reaffirm our support for the State of Palestine's full membership in the United Nations in the context of the unwavering commitment to the vision of the two-state solution based on international law including relevant UNSC and UNGA resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative that includes the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine in line with internationally recognised borders of June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital living side by side in peace and security with Israel."

The second statement, released in July 2025, reaffirmed that:[38]

a. It condemns Israel's attacks on Iran.

b. "The situation in the Gaza Strip also raised concern, especially regarding the occupation of Palestine. For the Global South countries, the solution lies in the creation of a Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel, as outlined in the 1967 United Nations resolution."

5. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

The SCO statements,[39] which primarily covers the Eurasian region, reflect a high level of generality and do not convey clearly defined positions on the conflict in Palestine. The organization includes 10 member states, namely China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran and Belarus, in addition to two observer states and fourteen dialogue partners. In its July 2024 statement, the SCO expressed, "deep concern about the escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Member States strongly condemn the actions that have resulted in extensive loss of life among civilians and a humanitarian disaster in Gaza." It added, "The Member States stress the importance of ensuring immediate, complete and stable ceasefire, as well as access to humanitarian aid, and intensifying efforts to restore peace, stability and security for all populations in the region," and noted "that an overarching and fair settlement of the Palestinian issue is the only path to ensuring peace and stability in the Middle East."

The SCO condemned Israel's attack on Iran in June 2025, stating that it was an action against "civilian targets, including energy and transport," and represented a clear violation of Iran's sovereignty and of international law and norms.[40]

On 1/9/2025, the leaders of SCO, in a joint statement following the 25th summit of heads of state and government in Tianjin, China, "expressed 'deep concern' over the continued escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza." They "strongly condemned the actions that have led to numerous casualties among the civilian population." The SCO member states "stressed the need to achieve a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire as soon as possible, ensure the entry of humanitarian aid to Gaza, and increase efforts to ensure peace, stability, and security for residents in the region." The statement affirmed that the "only way to ensure peace and stability in the Middle East is a comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian issue."[41]

Despite increasing indications of a shift toward security and defense cooperation, the organization's positions remain less clear than those of BRICS, even with the substantial overlap in membership between the two bodies.

6. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

The ASEAN, founded in 1967, comprises 10 countries: Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, Brunei and Myanmar. Member states' positions on the Arab-Israeli conflict vary, a divergence that became particularly evident after Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Early statements following the events of 7 October ranged from sharp criticism of Israel and open support for Palestinian resistance, to countries maintaining their traditional alignment with Israel.

As the conflict persisted, early signs of limited shifts appeared within some of these countries, particularly those traditionally regarded as neutral. Singapore stood out in this regard, as its foreign minister stated that the Israeli military response "went too far." Nevertheless, based on state-level reactions, the orientations of ASEAN, countries can be categorized as follows:[42]

a. States supportive of Palestine, including Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei.

b. States supportive of Israel, most notably the Philippines, though with civil society dissent.

c. Neutral states, including Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Vietnam shows a tendency toward further developing its relationship with Israel.

d. Myanmar, which is facing a civil war, has played no meaningful role in the conflict, despite Israel's provision of arms to its military council until 2022.

A review of ASEAN's statements during Operation al-Aqsa Flood points to a relative shift toward greater support for the Palestinian position. This trend was also reflected in voting at the UNGA in favor of a ceasefire, Israel's withdrawal from GS, the facilitation of humanitarian aid, and the release of hostages. Support for these resolutions grew more cohesive, with these states voting unanimously in favor of 3 of the five UNGA resolutions.[43]

7. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States

Established in 2011, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) comprises 33 states from Latin America and the Caribbean. The positions of its member states regarding the war in GS are divided into two groups. It should be noted that any decision expressing the stance of the bloc as a whole requires consensus. However, this does not preclude the issuance of statements by subsets of member states that converge around a shared position:[44]

a. **The first group:** Comprising 26 countries and representing 85.5% of CELAC's population, this group is led by Brazil. On 1/3/2024, it issued a joint statement calling for an immediate ceasefire in GS. The statement said, "Aware of the intransigence reflected in the statements of the Israeli government and the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza, we deplore the killing of Israeli and Palestinian civilians…. We also express deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the suffering of the Palestinian civilian population." It added, "The heads of state 'strongly' endorsed the United Nations General Assembly's. demand for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza and for all parties to the conflict to comply with international law, especially regarding the protection of civilians. The UN resolution was adopted in December 2023." Furthermore, the declaration by the CELAC countries also cites ongoing cases before the ICJ to "determine whether Israel's continued occupation of the State of Palestine constitutes a violation of international law and whether Israel's attack on Gaza would constitute genocide. The countries also emphasize the demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and reiterate the two-state solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side within secure and recognized borders."

b. **The second group:** Comprising seven countries and representing 14.5% of CELAC's population, this group is most closely aligned with Israeli positions.

It includes Argentina, Uruguay, Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Paraguay and Mexico.

However, the positions of these groups were not always consistent across all countries.[45] For instance, both Mexico and Brazil initially criticized the Palestinian attacks on Israel at the outset of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, while also condemning Israel's response. These two countries appear to have pursued a "role-distribution" approach to diplomacy. In practice, their presidencies took clearer and more decisive stances than their foreign ministries, where statements were dominated by careful diplomatic language. Although Mexico criticized Israeli policies, it stopped short of severing ties between the two sides.

The divergence in positions among these states is occasionally reflected in Ecuador's stance. In November 2023, Ecuadorian Vice President Veronica Abad sought a peaceful settlement between the Palestinian resistance and Israel. Ecuador supported Palestine's bid for full membership in both the UNSC and the UNGA, while simultaneously condemning the resistance's attack in October 2023.

Argentina's position appears to be the most openly aligned with Israel, reflecting both President Javier Milei's religious affinity for Judaism and the deepening trade relations between the two countries, as well as the growing influence of the Jewish lobby in Argentina.[46] By contrast, Bolivia's stance on the Palestine issue shifts with changes in government. Under the leftist presidency of Luis Arce, Bolivia severed diplomatic ties with Israel following 7 October; yet, after the right-wing government of President Rodrigo Paz assumed power in October 2025, relations with Israel were restored, a pattern that echoes similar developments in 2009 and 2019.[47]

Third: International Non-Governmental Organizations

International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) are private, non-profit entities that operate independently of any government. They function across borders and engage in diverse fields, including legal, social, media, economic and medical activities, among others. Their total number is estimated to be at least 10 thousand.[48]

The position of these INGOs on the Palestine issue, particularly in the aftermath of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, is evident in their public statements. In May 2025, 55 INGOs jointly condemned the measures announced by the Israeli government aimed at restricting their operations in the WB and GS. The statement noted, "Under the new provisions, INGOs already registered in Israel may face de-registration, while new applicants risk rejection based on arbitrary, politicised allegations, such as "delegitimising Israel" or expressing support for accountability for Israeli violations of international law. Other disqualifiers include public support for a boycott of Israel within the past seven years (by staff, a partner, board member or founder) or failure to meet exhaustive reporting requirements. By framing humanitarian and human rights advocacy as a threat to the state, Israeli authorities can shut out organisations merely for speaking out about conditions they witness on the ground, forcing INGOs to choose between delivering aid and promoting respect for the protections owed to affected people. INGOs are further required to submit complete staff lists and other sensitive information about staff and their families to Israel when applying for registration. In a context where humanitarian and healthcare workers are routinely subject to harassment, detention and direct attacks, this raises serious protection concerns. These new rules are part of a broader, long-term crackdown on humanitarian and civic space, marked by heightened surveillance and attacks, and a series of actions that restrict humanitarian access, compromise staff safety, and undermine core principles of humanitarian action. They are not isolated but part of a wider pattern that includes:[49]

1. Blocking or delaying aid through arbitrary bureaucratic restrictions, logistical obstacles, and complete sieges, denying essential lifesaving supplies to Palestinians. (….)
2. Passing legislation aimed at curtailing the operations of UNRWA, the largest provider of essential services for Palestinians.
3. Advancing legislation to impose a tax of up to 80 per cent on foreign government funding to Israeli NGOs, while barring them from seeking recourse through the Israeli court system - including organisations that serve as partners for INGOs to deliver assistance and uphold protections in communities facing displacement, demolitions, or settler violence.

4. Suspending work visas for international staff and revoking permits for Palestinians residing in the West Bank to access Jerusalem, severely disrupting operations.
5. And now, making INGO registration conditional on political and ideological alignment, undermining the neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian actors."

Furthermore, more than 100 humanitarian agencies have warned,"The Israeli government's siege starves the people of Gaza."[50]

Fourth: Major International Powers

1. United States

US policy following Operation al-Aqsa Flood can be divided into two distinct phases. The first occurred under the Democratic presidency of Joe Biden, from October 2023 until the end of December 2024. The second began with the Republican presidency of Donald Trump in early 2025 and continues up to the time of writing.

The US administration's policies in both phases exhibited several shared characteristics, the most significant of which are:[51]

a. Condemning Operation al-Aqsa Flood as an unjustified act of "terrorism," while disregarding the fact that it was a response to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories, the sixteen-year land and naval blockade of GS prior to the operation, and the relentless series of Israeli attacks since 1948, which have included fifteen wars against GS. Notably, Israel has launched six major wars on GS since 2007, following Hamas's takeover of the Strip, in 2007, 2008/2009, 2012, 2014, 2018/2019, and 2021.
b. Blocking UNSC resolutions calling for a ceasefire and humanitarian access through the use of the veto on six occasions up to September 2025,[52] while expressing reservations about the rulings of the ICJ and the ICC condemning Israel for genocide and calling for the referral of Israel's prime minister and minister of defense. This position has been accompanied by the rejection of intergovernmental and non-governmental reports documenting Israel's repeated

violations of international law, including genocide. Moreover, on 6/2/2025, President Donald Trump issued an executive order imposing sanctions on the ICC in response to the arrest warrants issued against Israeli leaders. In June 2025, the US further imposed financial sanctions on four ICC judges, including two who had been involved in investigating alleged crimes by Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant. In parallel, the Trump administration imposed financial sanctions on Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, following her publication of a report documenting Israeli violations of international law during the war in GS. The US also sought to remove Albanese from her post, although this attempt ultimately failed.

c. Providing financial, military and diplomatic support to Israel. During the two years of the war (October 2023 – September 2025), US military assistance to Israel totaled $21.7 billion, according to Brown University. Moreover, the US incurred additional military expenditures, estimated at $12.07 billion over the same period, to step-up its military operations in the region in support of Israel, bringing total US spending on the post-7 October wars to $33.77 billion. Reports issued by UN bodies further indicate that "Israel benefits from the largest-ever defense procurement program – for the F-35 fighter jet, led by United States-based Lockheed Martin, alongside at least 1,650 other companies, including Italian manufacturer Leonardo S.p.A, and eight States."[53]

d. The sustained effort to broaden the Arab-Israeli normalization framework, with a clear focus on integrating Saudi Arabia into the Abraham Accords of 2020, while US policy on a two-state solution remains ambiguous.

e. A comparison of the US administration's approach to GS under the Democratic administration in 2024 (the final year of Joe Biden) with that of the Republican administration in 2025 reveals significant divergences and inconsistencies in articulating the strategy the US adopts regarding GS. It also highlights the clear gap between US statements and actions. The following examples illustrate this point:[54]

   - Then-US Secretary of State Antony Blinken laid out a series of principles for the "day after" the war in Gaza at a meeting of the G7, in Tokyo in November 2023, as follows: "No forcible displacement of Palestinians. No Israeli re-occupation of Gaza after the war ends. No attempt to blockade or

besiege Gaza. A future governance that must be Palestinian-led, involving the internationally backed Palestinian Authority. No role for Hamas." By contrast, in February 2025, "Trump declared that the US would take over the Gaza Strip and build a 'riviera of the Middle East'." In practice, however, neither Blinken's commitments nor Trump's proposal were implemented.

- Under the Democratic administration, US statements consistently reaffirmed support for a two-state solution, yet these declarations were never translated into concrete measures. Under the Trump administration, this stance largely disappeared, giving way to conflicting policies: Israel was framed as a constrained state requiring additional territory, proposals were advanced to resettle Palestinians from the 1967 territories, and efforts to expand normalization with Israel intensified, entirely disregarding Palestinian interests. Notably, when France and Saudi Arabia convened a UN meeting to address the two-state solution, the US openly opposed it, despite widespread international support for the initiative.
- Both the Democratic and Republican administrations have consistently maintained the flow of US financial and military aid, along with media and political support for Israel, particularly within the UNSC.
- Between 2023 and 2025, the US devised plans to deliver aid to civilians in GS, first via a maritime port and later through airdrops. However, these initiatives were of questionable feasibility and offered only limited practical benefit.

f. In the first week of August 2025, Netanyahu indicated that his plan to reassert control over GS, end Hamas's rule, and disarm the movement, while transferring authority in the Strip to an Arab administration excluding the PA, had been agreed upon with the US only in its general outline, not in its details. This aligns with Trump's remark that "I know Israel will do what it has to do."

g. The US imposed a suspension on entry visas for the PA president and Palestinian delegates to UN meetings. This measure, announced by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, was implemented shortly before the UNGA convened in September 2025 at the invitation of France and Saudi Arabia to discuss the two-state solution, notably at a time when support for the initiative was growing among a broad range of countries, including US allies.

Under the 1947 "Agreement regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations" with the US,[55] which guarantees delegates access to UN headquarters in

New York, US authorities may deny entry only on the basis of national security (Article 4, Section 11). Such measures must not impede the functioning of the UN, and the US is obliged to formally notify the UN and provide alternative arrangements to resolve the issue.

h. The overlap between the two-state solution and the question of annexing the WB, or parts of it, has produced a distinctly ambiguous US stance. This was a feature that has arguably come to define both the first (2017–2021) and second (2025 – present) Trump administrations, as reflected in the following indicators:[56]

- In June 2019, during Trump's first presidency, US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman declared "I think Israel has the right to retain some, but unlikely all, of the West Bank."
- In August 2025, during Trump's second presidency, Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson expressed support for annexation, saying he believed that "Judea and Samaria" belong to the Jewish people and voiced his backing for the extension of Israeli sovereignty over WB.
- During Trump's second presidency, the new US Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, voiced support for the annexation of the WB and opposed the establishment of a Palestinian state, even going so far as saying, "There's really no such thing as a Palestinian."[57]
- Notably, President Trump largely avoided direct engagement on the issues of annexation and a Palestinian state, while simultaneously taking a leading role in declaring Jerusalem as Israel's eternal capital, endorsing its annexation, and relocating the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Trump's "Peace" Initiatives Regarding GS

President Trump consistently portrayed himself as a "peace advocate," both globally and in the Middle East. He unveiled his plan for GS on 29/9/2025, which Israel immediately accepted, while the Palestinian resistance confirmed its approval on 3/10/2025 to implement the first phase, focusing on procedural measures. Issues of sovereignty and national significance were deferred to Palestinian national consensus. The plan, comprising 20 points, can be summarized as follows:[58]

1. A reciprocal exchange involving the release of prisoners and the return of bodies by both sides.

2. The disarmament of the resistance and the dismantling of its military capabilities, including tunnels, coupled with guarantees that "New Gaza poses no threat to its neighbours or its people."
3. "No one will be forced to leave Gaza, and those who wish to leave will be free to do so and free to return."
4. "Gaza will be governed under the temporary transitional governance of a technocratic, apolitical Palestinian committee," with "oversight and supervision by a new international transitional body" to ensure stability in GS and neighboring states.
5. Rehabilitating infrastructure in GS and allowing the delivery of aid under the supervision of international organizations, in coordination with the transitional administration.
6. A gradual Israeli withdrawal from GS, coupled with the continued maintenance of a security presence in the areas surrounding the Strip.
7. These "conditions *may* finally be in place for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination." (However, the text neither articulates a US position on this prospective state nor frames its establishment as a binding commitment).

Approximately two weeks later, on 13/10/2025, the Sharm El-Sheikh Document was issued, which Trump termed the "The Trump Declaration for Enduring Peace and Prosperity." The document was endorsed by Egypt, Türkiye and Qatar alongside Trump, and it emphasizes the following points:[59]

1. Endorsement of Trump's plan announced in September 2025 to halt the fighting in GS.
2. Commitment to peaceful coexistence and respect for the religious heritage of the region's peoples.
3. "Determination to dismantle extremism and radicalization in all its forms."
4. Commitment "to the resolution of future disputes through diplomatic engagement and negotiation rather than through force or protracted conflict."
5. Emphasis on "the friendly and mutually beneficial relationship between Israel and its regional neighbors."

It is clear that US policy on the Palestine issue has seen no fundamental change compared with previous administrations. However, Trump's political approach is marked by two key dimensions that are expected to persist throughout the remainder of his term, should he remain in office:

1. The continued lack of moral justification, whether in terms of democracy, human rights or similar principles, for US interventions in the region.
2. The ongoing pattern of unpredictable international actions, which further diverts attention from the Palestine issue.

2. Britain

Having reviewed the EU's positions in the UN, especially those of its institutions and the general stance of its member states, the focus now turns to the United Kingdom as a key European power, even though it is no longer an EU member.[60]

The UK Government backed the truce agreement in January 2025 and said the agreement should be implemented in full. During the aid pause of March to May 2025, the government expressed concern that Israel was "at risk" of breaching international law in its blocking of aid. The government has reiterated that it is opposed to any forced displacement of Palestinians, loss of territory within GS, or annexation by Israel. The UK Government did not back the resumption of Israeli military action in March or its expansion in May 2025. On 20/5/2025, the government announced it would pause talks on a free trade agreement with Israel and review the 2023 road map on UK-Israel relations, which encompasses objectives for economic, social and defense cooperation. In June 2025, the government declared its readiness to take further measures, including targeted sanctions, should Israeli policies remain unchanged, and called on both Hamas and Israel to return to negotiations.

In May 2025, "the UK also announced a new round of sanctions against organisations and individuals involved in settler violence in the West Bank. This is the fourth series of sanctions announced since October 2023."

In June 2025, the UK, together with Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Norway, announced an asset freeze and travel ban against Israeli ministers Ben-Gvir and Smotrich. The UK said the two were "sanctioned for their repeated incitement of violence against Palestinian civilians". The Israeli Foreign Minister

Gideon Sa'ar said, "We will hold a special government meeting early next week to decide on our response to this unacceptable decision."

These actions follow a joint statement issued by the governments of France, Canada and Britain on 19 May which said that they were prepared to take "further concrete action" in response to a "wholly disproportionate" Israeli military action and the lack of aid entering GS since March 2025.

The UK government stated that it would recognize a Palestinian state alongside "a secure and stable Israel" when it determines that such recognition would best support the peace process. It further emphasized that the June (French-Saudi) conference should be used to advance progress toward a two-state solution, including by increasing support for the PA, agreeing on security arrangements for GS after Hamas, and taking measures to address Israeli settlements in the occupied WB. Emily Thornberry, the chair of the foreign affairs select committee, said the time was coming for the UK to recognize Palestinian statehood, adding, "We need to do it with friends. We need to do it with the French."[61]

It is evident that British decisions are largely symbolic and do not reflect a strategic shift, as seen in their positions within the UNSC. Nevertheless, growing concern over Israeli actions has increasingly shaped British policymaking, alongside the UK's tendency to align with emerging trends in Europe in particular, and globally more broadly.

3. Russia

The framework shaping Russian policy on the Palestine issue during 2024–2025 can be understood through a set of interrelated factors:[62]

a. Russia does not classify Hamas as a "terrorist" organization, unlike most Western countries, a position explicitly affirmed by President Putin, particularly following Hamas's electoral victory in 2006. This stance has facilitated Russia's growing engagement with Palestinian resistance movements, notably Hamas and PIJ, including hosting delegations from these groups. At the same time, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov described the 7 October attack as an "act of terrorism," while stressing that it does not justify Israel punishing the Palestinian people. President Putin endorsed Israel's "right to self-defense," yet the Russian government voted against Canadian amendments to a UNGA draft resolution calling for the "condemnation of Hamas."

b. Russia consistently upholds the necessity of establishing a Palestinian state through a two-state solution.

c. Israel's continued attacks on Syria (prior to the fall of the Syrian regime in December 2024), despite Russian warnings against ongoing violations of Syrian territory, indicate that Russia's engagement with Hamas may have been partly intended as leverage to pressure Israel to limit its interventions in Syria.

d. Operation al-Aqsa Flood has influenced Russia's war in Ukraine in several ways: by diverting Western attention and criticism from Russian policy in Ukraine; by compelling Russia to align with Iranian support for the Palestinian resistance, particularly following Iran's provision of drones for Russia's operations in Ukraine; by promoting economic cooperation between Russia and Iran to mitigate the impact of Western sanctions on both countries; and by necessitating coordination between the two powers in supporting the Syrian regime (prior to its fall).

e. Israel's unclear position on the Ukraine war prompted a cautious Russian response. President Putin delayed condolences to Israel for a week after Operation al-Aqsa Flood, linking Middle East developments to US failure in supporting "peace" efforts. Russia sought to curb the conflict in GS, halt the fighting, and allow humanitarian aid by submitting draft UNSC resolutions on 13 and 25/10/2023. These efforts failed due to US and UK opposition. Russia also opposed US amendments in December 2023 to a draft resolution submitted by the UAE.

f. Russia's efforts, particularly with Gulf states, focused on coordinating oil policies and production levels in ways that safeguard Russian interests, especially regarding oil sales.

The Russian-Ukrainian war, ongoing since February 2022, has become central to Russia's strategic interests. Moscow seeks to leverage its international relationships to secure victory, making it essential to view its policy in the Arab world, and the Middle East more broadly, through the lens of advancing its Ukraine objectives amid rising Western political, economic and military pressure on Russia.

Several Middle Eastern countries, including Israel, the Gulf states, Iran and Türkiye, did not join Western sanctions on Russia. This prompted Moscow to deepen ties with these powers, extending its engagement to the Palestinian

resistance and other members of the Axis of Resistance, as shown by the following indicators:[63]

a. Russia condemned US-Israeli attacks on Iran and recognized Iran's April 2024 and June 2025 responses as self-defense, while continuing to pursue a mediating role.

b. Media reports claimed that Russia sent security experts and satellite imagery to Ansar Allah in Yemen. Saudi Arabia expressed concern and objected to reports of Russian military supplies to the group.

c. Hamas leaders visited Russia multiple times: October 2023; January, March, June and October 2024; and February 2025. Hamas also expedited the release of Israeli hostages of Russian origin captured during the 7/10/2023 attack.

d. Russia sought to maintain relations with the new Syrian regime after the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's rule in December 2024, while ensuring the continued presence of some of its military bases. In late July 2025, Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani visited Moscow, as Russia criticized Israeli interventions in Syria and reaffirmed its support for Syria's unity and sovereignty.

It is evident that Russian policy toward the Palestine issue did not undergo a substantive change between the Biden administration and Trump's second presidency, as the Quartet in which Russia participates remained effectively paralyzed in both periods. However, concerns persist that Russia may offer concessions in the Middle East to secure gains in Ukraine, potentially limiting the depth of Iranian–Russian relations and those with other members of the Axis of Resistance, including Palestinian resistance movements.[64]

It is also evident that the Russian position oscillates between two perspectives:[65]

a. One view holds that Russia benefited from Operation al-Aqsa Flood and may have had prior knowledge of the planning or contributed indirectly through intelligence coordination with the resistance via Iran, aiming to disrupt US policy in the region and divert attention from Ukraine. This perspective also suggests that Hamas may have obtained Russian weapons through third parties or relied on Russian banking services to manage some financial ties amid mounting restrictions.

b. The second view sees Russia's stance on Operation al-Aqsa Flood as gradually shifting. It began with strong criticism of Israel and the US, as reflected in

official media, but from 13/10/2023, Russia described the attacks as an "act of terrorism," affirmed Israel's right to self-defense, and offered condolences for Israeli casualties, while also condemning Israeli strikes on civilians in GS. This perspective argues that Russia benefited by diverting attention from the war in Ukraine and by leveraging Western protests in support of GS to fuel unrest in Western societies.

4. China

Since 1978, Chinese foreign policy has been marked by pragmatism over ideology, a focus on peaceful international engagement, and the promotion of respect for international law. This approach is reflected in key initiatives, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, 2013), the Global Development Initiative (GDI, 2021), the Global Security Initiative (GSI, 2022), and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI, 2023). Alongside the concept of a "community with a shared future for mankind," these initiatives form a broader strategy to reshape the international environment and advance China's vision for the global order.[66]

China's GSI is considered a blueprint of China's foreign policy and seeks to "eliminate the root causes of international conflicts, improve global security governance, encourage joint international efforts to bring more stability and certainty to a volatile and changing era, and promote durable peace and development in the world." The GSI further intends to expand China's role in international politics and challenge the Western-led global governance system. The document also "advocates for a lasting peace and stability in the Middle East and seeks to strengthen relations with regional organizations."[67]

Building on these priorities, China submitted a proposal to the UNSC on 30/11/2023 for resolving the Middle East conflict, based on the following principles:[68]

a. Implementing a comprehensive ceasefire and ending the fighting. Parties to the conflict should truly implement the relevant UNGA and UNSC resolutions and immediately realize a durable and sustained humanitarian truce. Building on UNSC Resolution 2712, the Security Council, in response to the calls of the international community, should explicitly demand a comprehensive ceasefire and end of the fighting, work for deescalation of the conflict, and cool down the situation as soon as possible.

b. Protecting civilians effectively and demanding in explicit terms that all parties comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians. It is imperative to stop any violent attacks against civilians and violations of international humanitarian law, and avoid attacks on civilian facilities. The Security Council should further send a clear message on opposing forced transfer of the Palestinian civilian population, preventing the displacement of Palestinian civilians, and calling for the release of all civilians and hostages held captive as soon as possible.

c. Ensuring humanitarian assistance. All relevant parties must, as per requirements of the UNSC resolution, refrain from depriving the civilian population in Gaza of supplies and services indispensable to their survival, set up humanitarian corridors in Gaza to enable rapid, safe, unhindered and sustainable humanitarian access. The Security Council should encourage the international community to ramp up humanitarian assistance, improve the humanitarian situation on the ground, and support the coordinating role of the UN as well as the UNWRA in humanitarian assistance, and prepare the international community for supporting post-conflict reconstruction in Gaza.

d. Demanding that parties to the conflict exercise restraint to prevent the conflict from widening and uphold "peace" and stability in the Middle East. The Security Council should value the role of regional countries and organizations, support the good offices of the UN Secretary General and the Secretariat, and encourage countries with influence on parties to the conflict to uphold an objective and just position so as to jointly play a constructive role in deescalating the crisis.

e. Seeking political settlement. According to relevant UNSC resolutions and international consensus, the fundamental settlement of the question of Palestine lies in the implementation of the two-state solution, restoration of the legitimate national rights of Palestine, and the establishment of an independent State of Palestine that enjoys full sovereignty based on the 1967 border and with east Jerusalem as its capital. The Security Council should help restore the two-state solution. A more broad-based, authoritative and effective international peace conference led and organized by the UN should be held as soon as possible to formulate a concrete timetable and roadmap for the implementation of the two-state solution and facilitate a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. Any arrangement on the future of Gaza must respect the

will and independent choice of the Palestinian people, and must not be imposed upon them.

China's foreign policy principles are reflected in its stance on Operation al-Aqsa Flood, as outlined by Foreign Minister Wang Yi on 7/3/2025:[69]

a. Gaza belongs to the Palestinian people. It is an inseparable part of the Palestinian territory.

b. Changing its status by forceful means will not bring about "peace," but only new chaos.

c. China supports the plan for restoring "peace" in Gaza initiated by Egypt and other Arab countries. The will of the people must not be defied, and the principle of justice must not be abandoned.

d. Major countries should promote comprehensive and lasting ceasefire, ramp up humanitarian assistance, observe the principle of Palestinians governing Palestine, and contribute to the reconstruction in Gaza. The international community need to build consensus and promote "peace" between Palestine and Israel.

e. The Palestinian question has always been at the heart of the Middle East issue. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict takes place again and again simply because the two-state solution is only half achieved. The international community should focus more on the two-State solution and give more support to independent statehood for Palestine. All parties in the Middle East need to rise above differences to support Palestinian statehood.

f. The State of Israel has long been a reality.

g. All Palestinian factions need to deliver on the Beijing Declaration to achieve unity and self-strengthening.

h. Concerning the military clashes since the start of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, China urged that "Neither the Israelis nor Palestinians should become targets of armed attacks or collective punishment."[70]

Most Chinese statements condemned several Israeli actions,[71] including the attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus in April 2024 and the assassination of Hamas leader Isma'il Haniyyah in Tehran in July 2024, as well as the US-Israeli attack on Iran in June 2025.

5. India

Despite the rapid expansion of India-Israel relations since the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in 2014, and India's frequent avoidance or abstention regarding the repercussions of Operation al-Aqsa Flood in UN votes, India nevertheless endorsed the UNGA New York Statement of 12/9/2025 supporting the establishment of a Palestinian state on the basis of the two-state solution, despite strong opposition from the Israeli government.[72]

6. Japan

Japan's position can be delineated along the following dimensions:[73]

a. Japan condemned the Palestinian resistance attack on 7/10/2023, expressed concern over the repercussions of the Israeli response, particularly its impact on civilians, and emphasized the necessity of negotiations between the two sides in order to achieve a comprehensive "peace."

b. Official statements from Japanese authorities, political parties and civil society organizations reflect increasing criticism of Israeli policies in the WB and GS.

c. Japan affirms that a two-state solution represents the most appropriate path to resolving the Middle East conflict.

d. Japan regards UNSC resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Roadmap, and the Arab Initiative as the accepted framework for negotiations between the parties, while emphasizing the need to avoid violence.

e. Japan's engagement in resolving the conflict rests on three pillars: political dialogue with Middle Eastern parties, confidence-building between Palestinians and Israelis, and the provision of economic assistance to the Palestinians. Japan intends to continue these efforts through the Cooperation among East Asian countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD), and the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative.

f. Japan remains firmly committed to its position that all settlement activities in the 1967 occupied territories are illegal and must be halted.

g. Japan supports the two-state solution as the most viable outcome in the Middle East and endorses Palestine's full UN membership, as reflected in Japan's 2024 UN vote.

h. Providing support to the Palestinians, particularly in GS, with Japanese assistance totaling $240 million from the outbreak of the war in October 2023 through October 2025.

Fifth: International Public Opinion

A study by Walid ‘Abd al-Hay, the expert in futures studies, highlighted a significant decline in Israel’s international standing,[74] a trend that appears to have persisted in 2025. This is reflected in public opinion on Israeli policies across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas, as shown in the following table:

Table 1/8: International Views of Israel 2025 (%)[75]

Countries	Unfavorable	Favorable	Confidence in Netanyahu	
			No confidence	Confidence
Canada	60	33	66	26
US	53	45	52	32
Netherlands	78	19	78	19
Spain	75	18	84	11
Sweden	25	20	78	18
Greece	72	23	74	21
Italy	66	29	80	14
Germany	64	31	76	21
France	63	28	77	17
Poland	62	16	70	11
UK	61	30	68	24
Hungary	53	36	57	31
Indonesia	80	17	76	19

Countries	Unfavorable	Favorable	Confidence in Netanyahu	
			No confidence	Confidence
Japan	79	13	78	10
Australia	74	25	72	20
South Korea	60	31	64	25
India	29	34	28	34
Türkiye	93	4	94	2
South Africa	52	34	54	28
Kenya	42	50	40	54
Nigeria	32	59	38	50
Mexico	61	24	65	19
Brazil	58	32	63	27
Argentina	40	26	55	17

The 24-country median for international views of Israel shows that negative perceptions prevail at 62%, compared with 29% holding positive views. In terms of international confidence in Netanyahu, 69% expressed a lack of confidence, while only 21% expressed confidence.

Additional surveys underscore this trend, particularly in Europe, which has historically been the region most aligned with Israeli policies.[76] These findings are further reinforced by polling on attitudes toward the Palestinians.[77]

A review of US public opinion polls shows a gradual decline in Americans approval of Israel's military action in GS, as illustrated in the following table:

Table 2/8: Americans' Overall View of Israel's Military Action in GS (%)[78]

	Approve	Disapprove
November 2023	50	45
July 2025	32	60

When examined by partisan affiliation, the polls reveal a clear divide in US public opinion, as reflected in the following table:

Table 3/8: Support for Israel's Military Action in GS, by US Party Affiliation (%)[79]

Party Affiliation	November 2023	July 2025
Republicans	71	71
Independents	47	25
Democrats	36	8

Surveys indicate a pronounced divide within American public opinion and an even sharper partisan split, with differences between Republicans and Democrats widening from roughly twofold in November 2023 to ninefold by July 2025.

Meanwhile, the Gaza blockade-breaking "Global Sumud Flotilla" highlighted growing international and popular sympathy for the humanitarian crisis in GS. Launched after mid-2025 by international civil society groups,[80] it included dozens of vessels from multiple countries and drew participation from political, parliamentary, human rights and cultural figures.[81]

Conclusion

The international dimension of 2026–2027, particularly concerning the strategic aspects of the Palestine issue, can be summarized as follows:

1. The urgent reconstruction of GS is likely to be a central point of contention over the next two years in international dealings on the Palestine issue. This process will likely be shaped by international and regional political pressures, placing Palestinian negotiators in highly complex conditions. Future Palestinian and international discussions are expected to focus on the following points:

- The scale, allocation, priorities and oversight of aid, particularly at crossings between GS and Israel and Egypt, as well as the prospects for operating the Gaza port and airport.

- Political conditions set by donor countries, including the structure of the political and administrative authority in GS, the disarmament of the resistance, recognition of Israel, and the promotion of Arab–Israeli normalization. These may also involve attempts to reinterpret, weaken or even overturn international judicial rulings against Israel, as was the case with the 1975 resolution labeling Zionism as racist, which was revoked in 1991.
- The designation of bodies responsible for implementing reconstruction plans, likely leading to extensive and intense negotiations among the companies involved in these projects.

This suggests that the reconstruction of GS will be extremely challenging. Countries traditionally supportive of the resistance, such as Iran, Russia, China, some Arab and Muslim countries, and certain less US-aligned countries in Europe and the developing world, have shown limited capacity or willingness to provide substantial material or financial aid, even if their assistance carries fewer political conditions. Conversely, the most capable donors, the US, Europe and most Gulf states, are likely to impose the strictest political and strategic conditions. Palestinians will thus face a stark choice: endure prolonged devastation, poverty and minimal reconstruction, or make political concessions as severe as the devastation itself.

2. International diplomatic engagement concerning the "Palestinian state or the two-state solution" is expected to continue, yet significant progress is unlikely over the next two years for multiple reasons. The ongoing trend of instability in the Middle East[82] will inevitably shape the Palestine issue, producing both negative and positive consequences. Crucially, the outcomes of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, the positions adopted by Arab and Muslim countries, and the broader challenges stemming from heightened political instability in the region collectively define the central contours of future developments. Furthermore, the probability of a Black Swan event in such a volatile region, which ranks highest globally in terms of instability, further increases the potential for unexpected and transformative shifts. The future recognition of a Palestinian state will also confront a distinctly Israeli policy in the coming years, aimed at altering the facts on the ground in the 1967 occupied territories to make the establishment of a Palestinian state increasingly difficult. This policy includes the continued expansion of settlements, the systematic dismantling of Palestinian political structures (whether the PA or

resistance factions) and the imposition of pressures that encourage both forced and "voluntary" displacement. While these measures may reduce international pressure, they could simultaneously generate tensions between Israel and certain international actors, reflecting Israeli apprehension regarding the implications of expanding international recognition of Palestine as a state. These dynamics are closely tied to the two-state solution, whose origins trace back to UN Resolution 181 of 29/11/1947 and extend to the UN conference convened by France and Saudi Arabia in July 2025, whose statement reaffirmed the necessity of a two-state resolution. It appears that Israel's response may take the form of severe retaliatory measures aimed at preventing such developments. Impeding the reconstruction of GS is likely to serve as one of Israel's primary instruments, linking any rebuilding efforts to conditions and procedures designed to curtail Palestinian gains of a strategic character. Moreover, given the prevailing instability in the Middle East, Israel remains in a constant state of concern, which in turn prompts measures such as reoccupying GS, maintaining or tightening the blockade, increasing various forms of pressure, promoting the notion of so-called "voluntary migration" of Gazans, or asserting Israeli sovereignty over areas in the WB and surrounding GS. Consequently, these actions could entail a range of repercussions for Israel, including international isolation, setbacks in Arab-Israeli normalization, increased responsibility for supporting the Palestinian population, the imposition of sanctions by international actors, and heightened security threats on multiple fronts.[83] Therefore, it appears that Israel faces only two narrow diplomatic pathways in its engagement with the international community, namely:

- The rejection of the two-state solution, with all its previously noted implications by the international community, particularly in the event of even relative US leniency on the issue.
- Acceptance of a two-state solution, accompanied by redefining the state as demilitarized and closer to autonomy, with Palestinian state borders drawn to provide Israel extensive security advantages, including the ability to veto certain policies of any governing authority in the proposed Palestinian state. Muslims would retain freedom of access to *al-Aqsa* Mosque under Israeli sovereignty, and Jerusalem would remain Israel's eternal capital. Under this plan, the Palestinian state could include Areas A and part of B, while Area C would remain under Israeli control, as most settlements are located in Area C, which constitutes

approximately 61% of the WB. However, the establishment of a Palestinian state, even in a form acceptable to Israel, would require dismantling some or all of the WB 141 settlements and 335 outposts, in addition to the 15 Israeli neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, which house over a million Jews.[84] Such dismantling, particularly given the ICJ's ruling on their illegality, could trigger civil conflict between settlers in WB and right-wing supporters on one side and the Israeli government on the other, a risk further heightened by Israel's ethnic diversity and subcultural divisions.[85]

Regarding displacement, large-scale forced displacement does not appear to be internationally acceptable; however, Israeli right-wing policies could drive developments in that direction if favorable international and regional conditions emerge. The situation in GS is more acute than in the WB due to the severe living conditions resulting from the war, though such a scenario is unlikely to materialize in the near term (2026–2027).

3. As for Israel's international relations, they cannot be understood without considering the relative shift in global public opinion and the positions of key regional blocs. In the EU, the African Union, CELAC and BRICS, stances have become noticeably less favorable toward Israel. In the US, the Democratic Party's policies may produce some divergence between US and Israeli approaches, given recent trends in American public opinion. A Democratic president or increased Democratic influence in Congress would likely unsettle the Israeli right more than a Republican consolidation in the midterm elections.

It appears that neither Russia nor China is likely to undergo a strategic shift in their positions regarding the Palestine issue. However, Russia may become somewhat freer from the burdens of the Ukrainian war, expected to subside during 2026–2027, potentially enabling it to play a more active role in the region, which could be relatively favorable for the Palestinian side. China, meanwhile, is likely to focus on the Taiwan issue during 2026–2027. Despite its increasingly pragmatic diplomacy, heightened tensions over Taiwan could place Israel in a delicate position, caught between US demands on one hand and Chinese expectations on the other.

Finally, tensions could emerge between Israel and countries insisting on enforcing the ICC ruling, particularly concerning the arrest of Israeli figures such as Netanyahu and his former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. Several European

countries, including Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, Lithuania and Slovenia,[86] have signaled their readiness to implement the ruling, alongside dozens of other states across multiple continents.

Furthermore, Israel's ambitions to advance the "Greater Israel" project are likely to persist, whether through a security-oriented approach centered on expansion and buffer zones between Israel and neighboring Arab states, as promoted by Netanyahu and the religious Zionist right,[87] or through an economic vision advanced by former prime ministers such as Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin, which casts Israel as the Middle East's economic and technological hub along the lines of the Benelux model (The Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg Union).[88] Both approaches carry significant risks for regional stability and independence.

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15. ‘Abbas Ismail, *The Israeli Racism: Palestinians in Israel: A Case Study*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (1), translated by Aladdin Assaiqeli, 2009.
16. Hasan Ibhais, Mariam Itani and Sami al-Salahat, *The Suffering of the Palestinian Woman Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (2), translated by Iman Itani, 2010.

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18. Firas Abu Hilal, *The Suffering of the Palestinian Prisoners & Detainees Under the Israeli Occupation*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (4), translated by Baraah Darazi, 2011.

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27. Muhammad Arif Zakaullah, *Religion and Politics in America: The Rise of Christian Evangelists and their Impact*, 2007.
28. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh and Ziad al-Hasan, *The Political Views of the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon as Reflected in May 2006*, 2009.
29. Ishtiaq Hossain and Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, editors, *American Foreign Policy & the Muslim World*, 2009.
30. Ibrahim Ghusheh, *The Red Minaret: Memoirs of Ibrahim Ghusheh (Ex-Spokesman of Hamas)*, 2013.
31. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, editor, *Gaza Strip: Development and Construction in the Face of Siege and Destruction*, 2014. (electronic book)
32. Muslim Imran Abu Umar, *Egypt, Syria and the War on Gaza: A Study on the Egyptian and Syrian Foreign Policy Responses to the 2008/2009 Gaza War*, 2015.
33. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, editor, *Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas): Studies of Thought & Experience*, 2017.
34. Karim El-Gendy, *The Process of Israeli Decision Making: Mechanisms, Forces and Influences*, 2nd edition, 2019.
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40. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *Illusions in the Palestinian Politics*, 2022.
41. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *The Road to Jerusalem: A Historical Study of the Islamic Experience in the Land of Palestine From the Time of the Prophets to the 21st Century*, 2023.
42. Osama Juma'a Alashqar, *Souls of the Flood: Exceptional Models of Heroism and Steadfastness in al-Aqsa Flood*, 2025.

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- *Al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini* (The Palestine Strategic Report) series, 14 volumes, covering the period 2005–2025.
- *Al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah* (Selected Palestinian Documents) series, 8 volumes, covering the period 2005–2012.
- *Al-Yawmiyyat al-Filastiniyyah* (The Palestine Daily Chronicle) series, 11 volumes, covering the period 2014–2024.
- *Aw Alastu Insana?* (Am I Not a Human?) series, 13 books.
- *Taqrir Ma'lumat* (Information Report) series, 30 books.
- *Malaf Ma'lumat* (Information File) series, 11 books.
- *Dirasat 'Ilmiyyah Muhakkamah* (Refereed Academic Studies) series, 17 books.
- Non-Serial Publications (111 books).

The Palestine Strategic Report 2024 – 2025

This Report

Al-Zaytouna Centre is pleased to present The Palestine Strategic Report (PSR) 2024–2025, now in its 14th consecutive edition. This report provides an academic, objective and comprehensive analysis of developments related to the Palestine issue across various dimensions. It offers up-to-date and accurate information and statistics through the end of 2025, complemented by analytical insights and forecasts.

Prepared by 14 specialized professors and researchers, this PSR consists of eight chapters that explore various aspects of the Palestinian situation. It examines the internal Palestinian scene, demographic and economic indicators, and the status of Jerusalem and its holy sites. The report also analyzes the courses of aggression, resistance and the peace process, while providing insights into the Israeli political, demographic, economic and military landscape. Furthermore, it discusses Palestinian Arab, Islamic and international relations. Notably, Operation al-Aqsa Flood has significantly influenced the report's findings and perspectives.

The PSR has emerged as a key reference in Palestine studies, serving as an indispensable resource that provides invaluable insights for those interested in Palestinian affairs. Al-Zaytouna Centre aspires, through the PSR, to make a significant contribution to the field of Palestine studies.

Prof. Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh

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