The United Nations Security Council is one of the six main United Nations (“UN”) bodies and is primarily tasked with ensuring international peace, approving changes to the UN charter, and accepting new members into the UN. The Security Council is the only UN body that can bind resolutions to member states. Moreover, only the Security Council has the power to authorize peacekeeping operations.¹ Inter-state diplomatic disputes are often resolved through Security Council mediation. In extreme cases, sanctions and military force can be used by the Council, if deemed fit, to resolve the situation at hand.²

The Question of Palestine

Statement of the issue:

The territorial dispute between the people of Palestine and Israel has been around for many years. The United Nations is sharply divided over how to proceed with the situation at hand. Connected to the territorial dispute, the United Nations continues to battle a plethora of issues surrounding the question of Palestine. These issues include properly outlining the humanitarian rights of the Palestinian people, their sovereignty over natural resources, ensuring sufficient supply for the numerous refugee camps, migration, disease, and violence between the Israelis and Palestinians.³ In

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² Ibid
recent years, the situation finds itself flaring up at different times over issues such as terrorism, and the actions of other nations. Furthermore, the United Nations finds major resistance from both sides. Israel remains unwilling to alter its policies surrounding the question of Palestine, leading to a diplomatic stalemate. Some attribute the violence and armed conflict between Israel and Palestine as a byproduct of this stalemate, which perpetuates the agitation of the Palestinians.\textsuperscript{4} Without a diplomatic solution, the violence ensues. The discussions around the fate of Israel and Palestine hold interest for many different member-states, especially since Israel finds itself surrounded by disapproving countries. The tension is further escalated by the outward support Israel has from the United States. The relationships between all of these countries has left the Middle East at a breaking point, with the threat of war continuing to loom overhead.

While there is no current consensus over the course of action that should be taken, the Security Council must attempt to solve the issues that arise due to the question of Palestine and the fact that these conflicts can often exacerbate regional tensions. Many civilians continue to be displaced without the proper living necessities or basic human needs. Children are left without access to shelter, education, or clothing. Disease and sickness have claimed many refugee lives. While many non-government organizations have been created to support the Palestinian refugees, such as UNRWA, the danger in the area, and misappropriation of aid, have slowed progress significantly. The armed conflicts also continue to lead to deaths from both sides, and with both groups laying claim to the Holy City of Jerusalem, more conflict is foreseeable.\textsuperscript{5}

**History:**

While the conflict over Jerusalem has been ongoing for many decades, the modern political debate began in 1947 with General Assembly Resolution 181. The resolution called for the establishment of a Jewish state and Palestinian state in Palestine. Jerusalem would be a shared ‘international city’ for both the Palestinians and Israelis.\textsuperscript{6} Given the shared interest in Jerusalem by the Muslims, Jews, and Christians,

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid
the proposal appealed to many member-states. The two-state solution has subsequently become the center of discussion for many leaders. The 1993 Oslo Accords outlined this plan and was backed by the Palestinian Authority and Israeli government. But since then, cooperation between the two parties has fizzled out, and the Palestinians gradually lost more land.\(^7\) While the one-state solution lacks international support, it is quickly becoming the reality on land. Following Resolution 181, the British Mandate over the area disappeared with their withdrawal, prompting an Israeli declaration of independence in 1948. This declaration was rejected by the surrounding Arab states, leading to the start of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. While the war cemented the existence of Israel’s statehood, it left many Palestinians displaced.

Tensions in the area were at a breaking point for the next few years. In 1967, Egypt’s decision to expel UN forces from Sinai and close the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping led to a preemptive attack from Israel. This would start the Six Day War, which would eventually leave Israel in control of the entire West Bank and Gaza.\(^8\) Having more dominant control of the region, Israel began to sanction new towns and settlements in occupied territory. The settlements remain a point of contention to this day, with many citing thousands of years of Jewish history as justification for the settlements.

Following the 1967 annexation of East Jerusalem, Israel declared the city as its permanent and indivisible capital. In 2017, the United States became the first foreign government to recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, leading to UN resolution ES-10/L.22, which declared the action of the US as “null and void”. \(^9\)

After Egypt made peace with Israel following the 1973 War, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) decided, with Soviet and Arab support, to develop its own military capabilities from the Lebanese base. This led to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which saw the PLO destroyed militarily.\(^10\) With the PLO weak and

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\(^7\) Ibid


\(^10\) UN. ‘Remarks at the Opening of the 2007 Session of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People Secretary-General’, United Nations, 27 February 2007,
scattered, rouge groups sought to take the vanguard of the Palestinian struggle. This led to a wave of terror attacks as Israel found the West Bank becoming harder to control. The popularity of Palestinian anger led to an outbreak of violent protests, becoming known as the First Intifada. The Intifada lasted for a few years, ending with the 1993 Oslo Accords, which saw Israel withdrawing from the West Bank and giving the Palestinians a limited self-government. While the Oslo Accords seemed to patch a few issues from either side, many were left unsatisfied with the outcome. Following the assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister in 1995, a co-signer of the Oslo Accords, by a Jewish extremist, both sides halted concessions. The result was a wave of new leaders who pledged to stop further concessions with the Palestinians. Israel continued to build settlements around Jerusalem and the West Bank, increasing their control over the undisputed territory. The rising tensions eventually led to the Second Intifada; a more violent version of the First. An increase in suicide bombings and rocket launches led to a jump in civilian casualties in the area. Among Israel’s responses was the construction of a comprehensive wall, which sealed the West Bank from the rest of Israel. The West Bank Wall is condemned by the majority of the international community as a violation of Article 2 of the UN Charter. Despite this, the Wall has reduced the number of suicide bombings in Israel. In 2005, Israel withdrew from Gaza, but maintained control of the airspace and borders. The 2006 elections in Gaza gave victory to the more radical Hamas over the PLO. The new government began to launch attacks on Israeli border communities, leading to a series of Gaza-Israel wars that continue to this day.

Analysis:

The Question of Palestine continues to be a point of tension on the international agenda and a focus for many around the world. While many solutions have been
proposed, none have been able to effectively please the parties involved. The conflict has caused many disparities in the region that the UN continues to attempt to address. The status of Jerusalem is arguably the most pertinent, having been declared "international territory" in the past yet exploited over the years. While sharing the city may seem like the most plausible solution, there is debate over what party will oversee it. Ensuring the safety of the city and being financially responsible over Jerusalem are tasks claimed by both Palestine and Israel. This is aside from the fact that both states wish to see Jerusalem as their capital.

The status of displaced Palestinians is also left unresolved, with 700,000 expected to return if the Right of Return was to be exercised. This does not include those already inhabiting the West Bank or the various refugee camps in the area. If the displaced citizens and their descendants were to return to the now Israeli settlements, many Israeli citizens would have to relocate and forgo their current homes. This would lead to more tension and violence in the region, and one of the main reasons why Israel continues to hold its position over the dispute over the area.

These two sub-issues have led to unrest within the state, a plethora of security issues, increase in terrorism, and a Palestinian financial drought. There have been claims by world leaders and UN inquiry chairs that categorize the situation as a violation of human rights and some push for a hard stance against either side. But with the sitting members of the Security Council being divided on the issue, it continues to persist. Many different UN committees have been created in response to the issues as they arose. Currently, the two main committees aimed at the Question of Palestine are CEIRPP and UNRWA. The UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, or the CEIRPP, advises the General Assembly on programs to enable Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East, or UNRWA, is a

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17 Ibid
human development and relief agency that supports over 5 million registered Palestinian refugees. The more controversial of the two committees has been the basis of survival for the refugees for the past 70 years, with funding coming from the donor contributions. While the need for the UNRWA is essential, it has seen contention from Israel and the United States.

Conclusion:

With the Question of Palestine being continuously left unresolved, an outbreak of issues has been on the rise in the past few years. The contention over the Gaza Strip and Israeli settlements have led to many skirmishes between Israeli troops and Palestinian militants that continue to claim lives. Core issues, like the refugee crisis in the region, increase the death toll in Israel-Palestine. Due to a lack of resources, the basic human needs are not available to those displaced due to the conflict. With the continued disagreement over Jerusalem as well, the council struggles to properly tackle and solve the many issues at hand. The Security Council must cooperate to not only find a middle ground for Palestine and Israel but must further solve the other issues that have arisen surrounding the Question of Palestine.

Questions:

1. What issues of the Question of Palestine must be addressed in the short term? The long term?
2. How can the Security Council cooperate with the governmental and non-governmental bodies currently involved in this issue?
3. What solutions can best please both the Palestinian and Israeli governments?
4. What measures can the Security Council take to ensure stability in the region and peace between neighboring countries?


UN. United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. ‘A/364 Of 3 September 1947’, United Nations, United Nations,
https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/what-security-council.