



ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CLASHES IN JERUSALEM

SUCCESS MANTRA STUDY MATERIAL

#ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CLASHES IN JERUSALEM

- The **clashes between the Israeli police and Palestinian protestors** have been taking place on a daily basis in and around **Jerusalem's Old City**, for weeks now. **Jerusalem is home to major religious sites that are sacred to Jews, Muslims, and Christians and is also the epicenter of Middle East Conflict.**
- For 100 years, Jerusalem has been the **place of violent confrontations between Arabs and Jews** and has remained one of the most bitterly contested cities known.



- However, the **latest clashes in Jerusalem** started a month ago with an Israeli move to stop some Palestinian gatherings at the beginning of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, it is already a time of heightened religious sensitivities.
- After the restrictions by Israel were eased, tensions over a plan of evicting dozens of Palestinians from an east Jerusalem neighborhood continue to fuel the confrontations between the two groups
- On May 10, 2021, stun grenades echoed all over the holy hilltop compound. **Hundreds of Palestinians were hurt** in the clashes between the stone-throwing protestors and Israeli Police firing tear gas and rubber bullets. **Police amid the clash was also injured.**
- Even with strong global condemnation, the clashes and confrontation between Israel and Palestine have continued.

Jerusalem: Capital of Israelis and Palestinians

- The people of Israel have viewed Jerusalem as its 'unified, eternal' capital. The country had captured east Jerusalem, which also includes the Old City, during the 1967 Mideast war, along with Gaza and West Bank.
- On the other hand, the people of Palestine demand those territories for their future state, with East Jerusalem serving as an eventual capital. But Israeli government annexed the

eastern part of Jerusalem in a move that is not recognized internationally.

- The conflict has led to the path where the fate of east Jerusalem has **become one of the thorniest issues in the peace process, leading to a halt more than a decade ago.**
- On May 10, 2021, Israelis were set to mark Jerusalem Day. It is a national holiday celebrating the annexation.
- In the past years, thousands of Israelis- mainly the religious nationalists-have marched through the old city of Jerusalem, including the densely populated Muslim Quarter, in a display that has been considered provocative by many Palestinians.

Significance of the Holy Hilltop:

- The clashes on May 10, 2021, took place in and around the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem. The mosque is considered to be the third-holiest site in Islam and it sits on a sprawling plateau that is home to **the iconic golden Dome of the Rock**. Muslims refer to the Holy Hilltop Compound as the Noble Sanctuary.
- For Jews, the walled plateau is also the holiest site. They refer to it as the temple mount as it was the location of biblical temples. In 70 A.D., the Romans destroyed the Second Temple, with only the Western Wall remaining.
- The mosques by Muslims were built centuries later. **Neighbouring Jordan** has been serving as the custodian of the site, which is **operated by an Islamic endowment called the Waqf.**
- The groups of the religious and nationalist Jews, in recent years, escorted by the police have been seen visiting the **Holy Hilltop Compound in greater number**. They have also been holding prayers in defiance of the rules that were established after 1967 by Jordan, Israel, and Muslim religious authorities.
- These frequent visits and **attempted prayers by Jews have been seen by the Palestinians as a provocation which often leads to more serious violence.**
- Some Israelis have stated that the site must be opened to all the worshippers. However, the Palestinians refuse and fear that Israelis will take over the site or partition it. The officials of Israel have said that they have no intention of changing the status quo.

Policy discrimination between Israeli and Palestinians:

- **Jews who are born in east Jerusalem are Israeli citizens**, while the **Palestinians from East Jerusalem are given a form of permanent residency** which can be revoked by the authorities if they live outside the city for an extended period.
- Jewish settlements have been built by Israel in east Jerusalem that is home to around 2,20,000 people. The settlements have severely limited the growth of Palestinian neighborhoods which leads to **overcrowding as well as unauthorized construction of thousands of homes that are at risk of demolition.**
- The **New York-based- Human Rights Watch and Israeli Rights Group B”Tselem** pointed the discriminatory policies in east Jerusalem and argued that Israel is guilty of the crime of apartheid.

Israel, on the other hand, has rejected those allegations stating that Jerusalem residents are treated equally.

- **Jerusalem violence leads to wider unrest:**

- The violence in Jerusalem and particularly in Al-Aqsa is often reflected across the region. **The Palestinian Militant Group Hamad, which rules Gaza**, has called for a new uprising, same as the one triggered by an **Israeli Politician's visit to Al-Aqsa in 2000**. The militants of Gaza have also fired rockets and balloons with devices attached to them in support of the Palestinian protestors.
- The protests have been held in the **occupied West Bank and in the Arab communities which are inside Israel**. Jordan as well as other Arab nations that have friendly relations with Israel have condemned its crackdown on the protests, while the archenemy of Israel Iran has encouraged the Palestinian protests.
- **The United States and European Union** have also condemned the violence and have expressed concerns about the evictions.

Israel-Palestine Conflict

- The seeds of the conflict were laid in **1917** when the then British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour expressed official support of Britain for a Jewish "national home" in Palestine under the Balfour Declaration. The lack of concern for the "rights of existing non-Jewish communities" i.e. the Arabs led to prolonged violence.
- Unable to contain Arab and Jewish violence, **Britain withdrew its forces from Palestine** in 1948, leaving responsibility for resolving the competing claims to the newly created United Nations. The UN presented a partition plan to create independent Jewish and Arab states in Palestine. Most Jews in Palestine accepted the partition but most Arabs did not.
- In **1948**, the Jewish declaration of Israel's independence prompted surrounding Arab states to attack. At the end of the war, Israel controlled about 50 percent more territory than originally envisioned UN partition plan. Jordan controlled the West Bank and Jerusalem's holy sites, and Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip.
- **1964: Founding of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)**
- **1967: In Six-day Arab- Israeli war**, Israeli forces seize the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank & East Jerusalem from Jordan and Sinai Peninsula & Gaza strip from Egypt.
- The United Nations grants the PLO observer status in **1975** and recognizes Palestinians' right to self-determination.
- **Camp David Accords (1978):** "Framework for Peace in the Middle East" brokered by U.S. set the stage for peace talks between Israel and its neighbors and a resolution to the "Palestinian problem". This however remained unfulfilled.
- **1981:** Israel effectively annexes the Golan but this is not recognized by the United States or the international community.
- **1987: Founding of Hamas**, a violent offshoot of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood seeking "to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine" through violent jihad.

- **1987:** Tensions in the occupied territories of West Bank and Gaza reached boiling point resulting in the First **Intifada** (Palestinian Uprising). It grew into a small war between Palestinian militants and the Israeli army.
- **1988:** Jordan cedes to the PLO all the country's territorial claims in the West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem.
- **1993:** Under the **Oslo Accords** Israel and the PLO agree to officially recognize each other and renounce the use of violence. The Oslo Accords also established the **Palestinian Authority**, which received limited autonomy in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank.
- **2005:** Israel begins a unilateral withdrawal of Jews from settlements in Gaza. However, Israel kept tight control over all border crossings (blockade).
- **2006: Hamas scores a victory in Palestinian Authority elections.** The vote leaves the Palestinian house divided between Fatah movement, represented by President Mahmoud Abbas, and Hamas, which will control the cabinet and parliament. Efforts at cohabitation fail almost immediately.
- **2007: Palestinian Movement Splits** after few months of formation of a joint Fatah-Hamas government. Hamas militants drive Fatah from Gaza. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas appoints a new government in Ramallah (West Bank), which is quickly recognized by the United States and European Union. Gaza remains under Hamas control.
- **2012-** UN upgrades Palestinian representation to that of "non-member observer state".
- **2014-** Israel responds to the kidnapping and murder of three Jewish teenagers in the West Bank by arresting numerous Hamas members. Militants respond by firing rockets from Gaza. Clashes end in uneasy Egyptian-brokered ceasefire.
- **2014-** Fatah and Hamas form a unity government, though distrust remains between the two factions.

The Territorial Puzzle

- **West Bank:** The West Bank is sandwiched between Israel and Jordan. One of its major cities is Ramallah, the de facto administrative capital of Palestine. Israel took control of it in the 1967 war and has over the years established settlements there.
- **Gaza:** The Gaza Strip located between Israel and Egypt. Israel occupied the strip after 1967, but relinquished control of Gaza City and day-to-day administration in most of the territory during the Oslo peace process. In 2005, Israel unilaterally removed Jewish settlements from the territory, though it continues to control international access to it.
- **Golan Heights:** The Golan Heights is a strategic plateau that Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 war. Israel effectively annexed the territory in 1981. Recently, the USA has **officially recognized** Jerusalem and Golan Heights a part of Israel.
- **Palestinian Authority-** Created by the 1993 Oslo Accords, it is the official governing body of the Palestinian people, led by President Mahmoud Abbas of the Fatah faction. Hobbled by corruption and by political infighting, the PA has failed to become the stable negotiating partner its creators had hoped.
- **Fatah-** Founded by the late Yasir Arafat in the 1950s, Fatah is the largest Palestinian political faction. Unlike Hamas, Fatah is a secular movement, has nominally recognized Israel, and has actively participated in the peace process.

- **Hamas-** Hamas is regarded as a terrorist organization by the U.S. government. In 2006, Hamas won the Palestinian Authority's legislative elections. It ejected Fatah from Gaza in 2007, splitting the Palestinian movement geographically, as well.

Two-State Solution

- The “**two state solution**” is based on a **UN resolution of 1947** which proposed two states - one would be a state where Zionist Jews constituted a majority, the other where the Palestinian Arabs would be a majority of the population. The idea was however rejected by the Arabs.
- For decades, it has been held by the international community as the only realistic deal to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Why is the solution so difficult to achieve?

- **Borders:** There is no consensus about precisely where to draw the line - with Israel building settlements and constructing barriers in areas like the West Bank that creates a de facto border. This makes it difficult to establish that land as part of an independent Palestine, breaking it up into non-contiguous pieces.
- **Jerusalem:** Both sides claim Jerusalem as their capital and consider it a center of religious worship and cultural heritage making its division difficult.
- In December 2017, Israel declared Jerusalem as its capital and the step found support from the USA, intensifying the situation in the region.
- **Refugees:** Large numbers of Palestinians who fled their homes in what is now Israel, during the preceding wars as well as their descendants believe they deserve the right to return but Israel is against it.
- **Divided Political Leadership on Both sides:** The Palestinian leadership is divided - two-state solution is supported by Palestinian nationalists in West Bank but the leadership in Gaza does not even recognize Israel. Further, while successive Israeli Prime Ministers - Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon, Ehud Olmert and Benjamin Netanyahu - have all accepted the idea of a Palestinian state, they have differed in terms of what it should actually comprise.

#ISRAEL IRON DOME AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM

Israel used its Iron Dome air defence system in recent violent clashes over Jerusalem.

About the system



- It is a **short-range, ground-to-air, air defence system** that includes a **radar** and **Tamir interceptor missiles** that track and neutralise any rockets or missiles aimed at Israeli targets.
- It is **used for countering** rockets, artillery & mortars as well as aircraft, helicopters and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV).
- It is capable of being **used in all weather conditions**, including during the day and night.
- It was **developed by the state-run Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries** and was **deployed in 2011**.
- Rafael claims a **success rate of over 90%, with more than 2,000 interceptions**, however experts agree the **success rate is over 80%**.
- It can **protect** deployed and manoeuvring forces, as well as the **Forward Operating Base (FOB)** and urban areas, against a wide range of indirect and aerial threats.

Components of the system

- The Iron Dome has **three main systems that work together** to provide a shield over the area where it is deployed which are:
- **Radar:** It has a detection and tracking radar to spot any incoming threats.
- **Weapon Control:** It has a battle management and weapon control system (BMC),
- **Missile Fire:** It also has a missile firing unit. The **BMC basically liaises between the radar and the interceptor missile**.

Indian Alternatives:

- **S-400 TRIUMF:** India has **S-400 TRIUMF**, which also caters to the three threats (rockets, missiles and cruise missiles). But they have **much longer range**.
- It has a much **larger air defence bubble** to knock off threats. It is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system (SAM) **designed by Russia**.
- The system can **engage all types of aerial targets** within the **range of 400km, at an altitude of up to 30km**.
- The system can **track 100 airborne targets and engage six of them simultaneously**.
- **Prithvi Air Defence and Advance Air Defence:** It is a **double-tiered system consisting of two land and sea-based interceptor missiles**, namely the **Prithvi Air Defence (PAD)** missile for high altitude interception, and the **Advanced Air Defence (AAD)** Missile for lower altitude interception.

- It is able to **intercept any incoming missile launched 5,000 kilometres away**. The system also **includes an overlapping network of early warning and tracking radars**, as well as command and **control posts**.

Ashwin Advanced Air Defence Interceptor Missile:

- It is also an indigenously produced Advanced Air Defence (AAD) interceptor missile developed by **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- It is the advanced version of the low altitude supersonic ballistic interceptor missile.
- The missile also **has its own mobile launcher, secure data link for interception, independent tracking and homing capabilities and sophisticated radars**.
- It uses an endo-spheric (within the Earth's atmosphere) interceptor that knocks out ballistic missiles at a maximum **altitude of 60,000 to 100,000 feet, and across a range between 90 and 125 miles**.

#UNSC MEETING OVER ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CLASHES

- The **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** held a meeting on the Israel-Palestine situation on May 16, 2021. The meeting was chaired by the Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.
- **UN Secretary-General António Guterres** was the first of nearly two dozen speakers on the meeting's agenda. He called the hostilities between the two parties 'utterly appalling' and said, "the current violence in Gaza & Israel only perpetuates the cycles of death, destruction & despair, and pushes farther to the horizon any hopes of coexistence & peace." He asserted that the fighting must stop immediately.
- This was **UNSC's first public meeting on the Israeli-Palestine conflict**. The UNSC had met privately twice last week over the worsening violence.



• Israel- Palestine Clashes

- The **hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians** have escalated to such a high level that was not seen since the 2014 war.
- The **United Nations** was forced to step up its diplomatic engagement and the UNSC met to discuss the conflict in public for the **first time with the conflict stretching into its seventh straight day**.
- However, the **UN Security Council** took no action even as all its member decried the death and devastation.
- The airstrikes in Gaza by both Israel and Hamas have killed over dozens of people including many women and children. Several buildings have been reduced to rubbles in the airstrikes with workers combing through to look for survivors.

China's Solutions

- China holds UNSC's rotating presidency for the month of May. **Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi** said in his statement that the escalating conflict between Israel and Palestine has caused a large number of casualties, including women and children and the situation is extremely critical and severe.
- He asserted that the international community must act urgently to prevent the situation from further deteriorating.
- **China advocated the following in response to current tensions between Israel and Palestine:**
- **Ceasefire is a current priority:** China called upon both parties to the conflict to immediately stop military actions and any action that worsens the situation including rocket launches, airstrikes and ground offensives.

- **Humanitarian assistance is an urgent need:** China urged Israel to earnestly fulfill its international treaty obligations and lift the blockade and siege of Gaza as soon as possible and guarantee the safety and rights of civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory. It also called upon the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestine.
- **International support is an obligation:** China urged that the UNSC must take effective action on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and reiterate its **firm support for the "two-state solution,"** and calm down the situation.
- The nation also called on the United States to support the Security Council in playing its due role in easing the tensions, rebuilding trust, and resolving the situation. China also called all the organisations and countries that have an influence in the region to play a more active role in the situation and make more effective effort.
- **Two-state solution is the ultimate way out:** China outlined that an ultimate way out of the Palestinian issue lies in the **implementation of the two-state solution.** China extended its support to the resumption of peace talks between Palestine and Israel as soon as possible on the basis of the "two-state solution".
- China also advocated for the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 border, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

US Ambassador to UN

- The US **Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield** said that US President Joe Biden had spoken with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, while US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had also been engaging with his counterparts in the region.
- **She called on Hamas to stop its rocket launches against Israel** and expressed concerns about inter-communal violence and warned against incitement on both sides and said the United States is prepared to lend its support and good offices should the parties seek a cease-fire.
- US President Joe Biden had earlier on May 15th spoken with **Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu and President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas** in separate calls to speak about efforts to broker a cease-fire.
- **Other Nations:** The envoys from all of UNSC's 15 members have though urged an immediate de-escalation; there is no indication of what next steps the council will take to resolve the situation.

#ISRAEL & HAMAS AGRRED TO CEASEFIRE

- **Israel and Hamas** have finally agreed to a ceasefire, after almost two weeks of violence that claimed hundreds of lives and reduced many structures to rubbles. The ceasefire came into effect from May 21, 2021.
- **Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Security Cabinet** voted on May 20, 2021 in favor of halting their military activity in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli security cabinet unanimously adopted Egypt's initiative for a bilateral ceasefire. The Palestinian militant group Hamas also agreed to a "mutual and simultaneous" cease-fire.
- The Palestinians across the **Gaza Strip were seen celebrating in the streets** after the ceasefire decision came into effect on May 21st. The ceasefire came after mounting international pressure calling for an end to the violence between both sides.



Palestine's Response

- **Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki** welcomed the unilateral ceasefire by Israel but he said it is not enough because Jerusalem remains the key issue.
- **US Statement:** US President Joe Biden hailed the ceasefire agreement reached between Israel and Hamas. He added that the US would help Gaza with humanitarian relief aid and also replenish Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system.
- The ceasefire came hours after the White House spokesperson Jen Psaki informed the media that the US believes that **Israel has achieved significant objectives in Gaza** that they had laid out to achieve to protect its own people and respond to thousands of rocket attacks from Hamas.
- He added saying that, this is why the **US believes Israel is in a position to start winding down its military operation.**

- **11-day war casualties**
- **According to Gaza Health Ministry**, at least **230 Palestinians** have been killed in the recent conflict including 65 children and 39 women, while around 12 people have been killed in Israel, as per Israeli authorities. The **casualties in Israel include an Indian National, Soumya Santosh, a 32-year-old caregiver.**

Background

- The latest round of fighting between Israel and Hamas ended inconclusively like the three previous wars. The conflict had begun on May 10, 2021 when Hamas fired long-range rockets toward **Jerusalem after days of clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound.**
- In response to the rocket attack, Israel launched hundreds of airstrikes into the **Gaza strip, reportedly targeting Hamas' military infrastructure.**

#INDIA, ISRAEL & PALESTINE

Recently, India's permanent representative to UN made a carefully crafted statement at the UN Security Council "open debate" on the escalating Israel-Palestine violence, striving to maintain balance between India's historic ties with Palestine and its blossoming relations with Israel.

Evolution of India's relationship with Israel & Palestine: **Nehru and Indira Gandhi era – Idealism & unequivocally pro-Palestine**

India stopped at recognising Israel

- **India's recognised Israel in 1950.** PM Nehru's reasoning was that it was "an established fact", and that not doing so would create rancour between two UN members. However, India did not have full diplomatic ties with Israel.
- All there was to show for the bilateral relationship was a consulate in Mumbai, established in 1953, mainly for issuing visas to the Indian Jewish community, and to Christian pilgrims. There was no Indian embassy in Israel till 1992.
- In 1948, India was the **only non-Arab-state among 13 countries** that voted against the UN partition plan of Palestine in the General Assembly that led to the creation of Israel.

Reasons for India siding with Palestine (and a cold shoulder for Israel) was

- India's own Partition along religious lines (**Historical basis**)
- Solidarity with the Palestinian people who would be dispossessed (**HR Perspective**)
- To ward off Pakistan's plan to isolate India over Kashmir (**Geopolitical reason**)
- Later, India's energy dependence on the Arab countries also became a factor (**Economic & Pragmatism**)
- To appeal to the sentiments of India's own Muslim citizens (**Domestic Politics**)

India and Palestine

- The relationship with Palestine was almost an article of faith in Indian foreign policy for over four decades. At the 53rd UN session, India co-sponsored the draft resolution on the right of the Palestinians to self-determination.
- In the 1967 and 1973 wars, India lashed out at Israel as the aggressor. In the 1970s, **India rallied behind the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation)** and its leader Yasser Arafat (received as Head of State) as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.
- In 1988, when the **PLO declared an independent state of Palestine with its capital in East Jerusalem, India granted recognition immediately.**

Changes after 1991- Pragmatism

- The **opening of an Indian embassy in Tel Aviv in January 1992** marked an end to four decades of giving Israel the cold shoulder.

- **India's decision to normalise ties with Israel in 1992** came against the backdrop of the break-up of the Soviet Union, need for economic pragmatism (i.e. access to Israeli technology), common threats of terrorism and massive shifts in the geopolitics of West Asia on account of the first Gulf War in 1990.
- The **India-Israel relationship continued to grow, mostly through defence deals, and in sectors such as science and technology and agriculture.**
- There were few high-profile visits, and they all took place when the BJP-led NDA-1 under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was in office.

India's balancing act with Palestine

- **Despite growing Indo-Israel ties**, New Delhi remained firmly on the side of the PLO, which was seen as ready for a political solution, and had accepted the two-state solution.
- In 1996 India opened a Representative Office in Gaza, which later moved to Ramallah.
- During the UPA's 10 years in office, the balancing act intensified, **and Mahmoud Abbas, head of the Palestinian Authority** that administers the West Bank, visited in 2005, 2008, 2010 and 2012.
- **India voted for Palestine to become a full member of UNESCO in 2011.** In 2012, India co-sponsored the UN General Assembly resolution that enabled Palestine to become a "non-member" observer state at the UN without voting rights.
- India also supported the **installation of the Palestinian flag on the UN premises in September 2015.**

Balancing act with Palestine

- India voted in favour of a resolution in the General Assembly opposing the Trump administration's recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.
- **At the UNHRC's 46th session** in Geneva earlier this year, India voted against Israel in three resolutions –
 - **one on the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people**
 - **A second on Israeli settlement policy, and**
 - **A third on the human rights situation in the Golan Heights.**
- In the current context of violence, India in its official statement appears to implicitly hold Israel responsible for triggering the current cycle of violence by locating its beginnings in East Jerusalem rather than from Gaza.
- The statement was also emphatic that "the historic status quo at the holy places of Jerusalem including the **Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount** must be respected. (The site, administered by Jordan, is revered in both Islam and Judaism. Jewish worshippers are not allowed inside, but have often tried to enter forcibly).