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Israel-Palestine Conflict

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Why is in news? Why did Hamas launch a surprise attack on Israel?

Recent attack:

The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) said Gaza was in a state of “stable instability”.

Yet, on 7th October morning, Israel witnessed the largest attack from the enclave — and perhaps the **worst security crisis in 50 years** — when dozens of Hamas militants, using motorcycles, pickup trucks, boats, paragliders and mid-range rockets, launched a highly coordinated attack, infiltrating Israeli cities, hitting military bases and killing and taking hostage soldiers and civilians.

Locations:

Israel:

It is a country in the Middle East, located at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea.

It is bounded to the north by Lebanon, to the northeast by Syria, to the east and southeast by Jordan, to the southwest by Egypt, and to the west by the Mediterranean Sea.

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Jerusalem is the seat of government and the proclaimed capital.

Israel is the world's only Jewish state.

Palestine:

It is an area of the eastern Mediterranean region, comprising parts of modern Israel and the Palestinian territories of the Gaza Strip (along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea) and the West Bank (west of the Jordan River).

It is also known as the **Holy Land** and is held sacred among Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Gaza Strip:

Gaza is one of the **focal points in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.**

It is bordered by Israel and Egypt on the Mediterranean coast.

It is a small self-governing Palestinian territory that came under Israeli occupation after the 1967 Arab Israeli War.

West Bank:

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It is a **landlocked territory near the Mediterranean coast** of Western Asia, bordered by Jordan to the east and by the Green Line separating it and Israel on the south, west and north.

The West Bank also contains a significant section of the western Dead Sea shore.

Since 1967, it has been under Israeli occupation.

Golan Heights:

Golan Heights refers to the border region captured from Syria by Israel during the Six-Day Middle-East War of 1967.

This region includes the **western two-thirds of the geological Golan Heights and the Israeli-occupied part of Mount Hermon.**

It is bounded by the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee on the west, Mount Hermon on the north, the seasonal Wadi Al-Ruqqd on the east, and the Yarmuk River on the south.

About the conflict:

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is over who gets what land and how it's controlled.

Though both Jews and Arab Muslims date their claims to the land back a couple thousand years, the contemporary political conflict began in the early 20th century.

Jews fleeing persecution in Europe desired to create a national homeland in an Arab- and Muslim-majority territory. This territory was part of the Ottoman Empire and later of the British empire.

The Arabs resisted, seeing the land as rightfully theirs. Since then both parties have battled several wars over the territory.

Timeline of the Conflict:

In 1917, the **Balfour Declaration**, the United Kingdom which controlled Palestine after World War I declared its support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. Arabs resisted it, which led to violence.

75,000 Jews emigrated to Palestine between 1922-26 and some 60,000 Jews emigrated in 1935. Palestinian Arabs demanded the UK to halt Jewish emigration, but the UK ignored such calls.

In 1923, the British Mandate for Palestine came into effect. The document was **issued by the League of Nations**. The Mandate gave the UK the responsibility for creating a Jewish national homeland in the region.

In 1936, after several rounds of violence between Jews and Arabs, the **Peel Commission** set up by the UK government recommended the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states.

In 1947, the **UK referred the issue of Palestine to the UN**. The UN gave a partition plan for independent Jewish and Arab states in Palestine. This was accepted by Jews but not by Arabs.

In May **1948, Israel declared its independence**. The Arab countries of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt invaded the newly-declared country immediately.

When the war ended, Israel gained some territory formerly granted to Palestinian Arabs under the UN resolution in 1947.

Egypt and Jordan also retained control over the Gaza Strip and the West Bank respectively. This territorial controlled remained in place till 1967.

In 1964, the **Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)** was formed as the national representative of the Palestinian people.

In 1967, a **six-day war took place** between Israel and Arab states. After the war, Israeli forces seized the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank & East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Sinai Peninsula & Gaza strip from Egypt.

In 1975, the United Nations granted the **PLO an observer status and recognized Palestinians' right to self-determination.**



Present Scenario:

Israel considers whole Jerusalem as its capital and not just a part of it. But Palestinians don't agree with that and rather want it to be their capital of future independent Palestine.

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Earlier this year, the Central Court in East Jerusalem upheld a decision to evict four Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah in favor of Jewish settlers.

Recently, with the start of Ramzan, Israeli police had put up barricades at Damascus Gate which created a problem for Palestinians.

Israeli police stormed inside Al-aqsa Mosque leaving a number of people injured. This was done on Jerusalem Day.

In retaliation, Hamas, the Islamist militant group that runs Gaza, fired dozens of rockets.

The Israelis launched an airstrike on Gaza in response, killing at least 65 Palestinians, including 16 children.

World's view of the issue:

While Non-Muslim countries recognize Israel's legitimacy and maintain diplomatic relations with it, but most are **critical of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians** and ongoing occupation of the West Bank

Most of the world believes that Israel's continued control of the West Bank is an unlawful military occupation

The **Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement**, which coalesced in 2005, aims to capitalize on international anger with Israel

The movement's strategy is to create costs to Israel's Palestinian policy through **boycotts of Israeli goods and institutions, divestment from Israeli companies**, and sanctions on the nation itself (hence the name BDS).

India's stand on the conflict:

India has **remained "steadfast" in its support for Palestinian rights** and has consistently voted in favour of Palestine at the United Nations.

India had **voted in the UN General Assembly** that had sharply criticised the United States for recognising Jerusalem as the Israeli capital in 2017.

India had **voted in favour of another UNGA resolution** "deploring the use of excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians" in 2018.

India has **consistently voted in favour of those resolutions that promote the two-state solution** with a Palestinian claim to East Jerusalem.

Recently, India **condemned "all acts of violence"** but specifically criticised rocket attacks from Gaza at an emergency closed-door session of the United Nations Security Council.

Solution/Way ahead:

Two-State Solution: The primary approach to solving the conflict is a so-called "two-state solution" that would establish Palestine as an independent state in Gaza and most of the West Bank, leaving the rest of the land to Israel.

Though the two-state plan is clear in theory, the two sides are still deeply divided over how to make it work in practice.

One-State Solution: The alternative to a two-state solution is a "one-state solution," wherein all of the land becomes either one big Israel or one big Palestine. Most observers think this would cause more problems than it would solve.

Signed in 2020, the **Abraham Accords** between Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and mediated by the United States, was a significant breakthrough to facilitate cooperation between Arab nations and Israel. Now, it's an urgent need of hour to find a peaceful and sustainable solution for the ongoing conflict.

India has **good relations with both Israel and Palestine** and is also attached to multilateral principles that can play an “enhanced” role in the search for a solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

India should enhance political and diplomatic support to talks, as well as development aid and cooperation for institution building in Palestine.