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THE ISRAEL- PALESTINE CONFLICT

**An Analysis of The Latest Surprise Attacks
by The Hamas**

S Shailesh

Edited by: Meenakshi Nair

About the author

S Shailesh is an undergraduate student at the Jindal School of International Affairs and is a Senior Research Analyst at the Centre for Security Studies, JSIA.

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The Israel-Palestine conflict, entrenched for over seven decades, traces its origins to historical disputes over land and national identity. This enduring conflict is marked by a complex interplay of territorial claims and deep-seated animosities between Israelis and Palestinians. Amidst this turbulent landscape, HAMAS emerged as a significant player in the late 1980s, and became prominent in 1987 during the first intifada, or Palestinian uprising, as a Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood¹. Initially conceived as a resistance movement against Israeli occupation, Hamas gradually evolved into a multifaceted entity encompassing political and military spheres, challenging Israel's existence, and its policies towards Palestinians².

Recent surprise attacks orchestrated by Hamas, on October 7th 2023, have once again catapulted the region into heightened tensions, triggering alarm across international communities³. These attacks, characterized by their suddenness and impact, have reignited global attention on the volatile Israel-Palestine issue. This paper endeavors to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the latest unexpected assaults by Hamas within the broader context of the long-standing Israel-Palestine conflict. The primary objective is to delve into the implications, motivations, and potential pathways toward resolution stemming from these recent events. By examining the intricacies of these attacks and their repercussions, this paper seeks to shed light on the complex dynamics of this enduring conflict and its wider implications for regional stability and international relations.

Historical Context of the Israel-Palestine Conflict

The Israel-Palestine conflict traces its roots through a series of historical events that have shaped the complex narrative of this enduring struggle. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as waves of Jewish immigration surged into Palestine amid aspirations for a Jewish homeland, tensions

¹ National Counterterrorism Center: FTOS. "National Counterterrorism Center: FTOS." National Counterterrorism Center | FTOS. Accessed December 6, 2023. https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/hamas_fto.html.

² Robinson, Kali. "What Is Hamas?" Council on Foreign Relations, October 31, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hamas>.

³ Livni, Ephrat, and Gaya Gupta. "What We Know about the War between Israel and Hamas." The New York Times, October 8, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/israel-gaza-hamas-what-we-know.html>.

heightened between the indigenous Palestinian Arab population and the incoming Jewish settlers.⁴ The Balfour Declaration of 1917, in support of establishing a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, further deepened these tensions⁵.

After World War I, the League of Nations granted Britain a mandate over Palestine, leading to increased Jewish immigration and the rise of Arab resistance⁶. The partition plan proposed by the United Nations in 1947 sought to divide the territory into separate Jewish and Arab states, but it was rejected by Arab leaders, leading to the Arab-Israeli War in 1948⁷. The subsequent establishment of the State of Israel and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fuelled long-standing grievances and sowed the seeds for ongoing conflict.⁸

Key issues central to the Israel-Palestine conflict include territorial disputes over land, particularly in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip⁹. The status of Palestinian refugees, the rights of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, security concerns, control of borders, settlements, and access to resources like water remain major points of contention.¹⁰ These unresolved issues continue to fuel animosities and shape the multifaceted nature of the conflict, leading to the unprecedented assault on Israel by Hamas.

⁴ Sela, Avraham, ed. (2002). "Palestine Arabs". *The Continuum Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East*. New York: Continuum. pp. 664–673. ISBN 978-0-8264-1413-7.

⁵ Tahhan, Zena Al. "More than a Century on: The Balfour Declaration Explained." Al Jazeera, November 2, 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/11/2/more-than-a-century-on-the-balfour-declaration-explained>.

⁶ Patel, Mira. "The Bloody History behind How Israel, and Palestine, Came into Existence ." The Indian Express, October 25, 2023. <https://indianexpress.com/article/research/the-bloody-history-behind-how-israel-and-palestine-came-into-existence-8980609/>.

⁷ U.S.A, Department of State. "Creation of Israel, 1948." U.S. Department of State. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/creation-israel#:~:text=On%20November%2029%2C%201947%20the,mandate%20was%20scheduled%20to%20end>.

⁸ Staff, Al Jazeera. "What's the Israel-Palestine Conflict about? A Simple Guide." Al Jazeera, October 15, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/9/whats-the-israel-palestine-conflict-about-a-simple-guide>.

⁹ Staff, BBC. "Israel Gaza War: History of the Conflict Explained." BBC News, November 15, 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-44124396>.

¹⁰ Ibid

Profile of Hamas

HAMAS, the acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya¹¹ (Islamic Resistance Movement) is an Islamist militant movement and a major political party in the Palestinian territories, governing over two million Palestinians in Gaza, is notorious for its armed resistance against Israel¹². In October 2023, Hamas launched a massive surprise attack on southern Israel, resulting in over 1,400 casualties and numerous hostages.¹³ Israel declared war on the group and expressed intentions to eradicate it, escalating tensions further.¹⁴ Designated as a terrorist organization by numerous countries such as the United States of America and members of the European Union, Hamas has origins dating back to the late 1980s when Sheikh Ahmed Yassin established it as the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza¹⁵. Rooted in resistance against Israeli occupation, Hamas emerged during the first intifada and subsequently published its charter in 1988, calling for Israel's destruction.¹⁶

Hamas functions under a varied leadership structure, with Ismail Haniyeh as its political chief and Yahya Sinwar overseeing Gaza's day-to-day affairs.¹⁷ Financially, Hamas faces challenges due to restricted official assistance and blockades imposed by Egypt and Israel since 2006–07, prompting reliance on support from countries like Iran and Qatar.¹⁸ Governing Gaza since 2005, Hamas has

¹¹ National Counterterrorism Center: FTOs. “National Counterterrorism Center: FTOS.” National Counterterrorism Center | FTOs. Accessed December 6, 2023. https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/hamas_fto.html.

¹² Robinson, Kali. “What Is Hamas?” Council on Foreign Relations, October 31, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hamas>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Robinson, Kali. “What Is Hamas?” Council on Foreign Relations, October 31, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hamas>

faced criticism for its governance, particularly regarding accountability and transparency issues¹⁹. Despite divisions within Palestinian leadership, Hamas remains an impulsive force, engaging in armed conflict with Israel through rocket attacks, incursions, and past conflicts, such as the 2021 and 2023 clashes, challenging stability in the region²⁰.

Unprecedented Surprise Attack

Hamas's recent assault on southern Israel, dubbed "Operation Al-Aqsa Storm," marked an unprecedented escalation in strategy and magnitude²¹. Initiated on October 7, Hamas launched thousands of rockets into southern and central Israel while breaching the heavily fortified Gaza border, causing significant casualties, and seizing hostages²². The attack by Hamas on Israel's Gaza blockade and occupation inflicted severe psychological trauma on Israelis and raised several concerns globally. Further, Israel declared war on Hamas, initiating a campaign to eliminate the group and free hostages, intensifying conflict with daily exchanges of **fire**, and imposing a complete siege on Gaza, exacerbating the enclave's dire situation²³. The ongoing violence, resulting in thousands of Palestinian and several hundred Israeli casualties, threatens a broader regional conflict²⁴. Concerns mount over the involvement of Hezbollah of Lebanon and Houthi rebels of Yemen, both backed by Iran, risking a wider conflagration.²⁵ Furthermore, experts question Israel's strategy, pondering the consequences of reoccupation and the potential

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

governance vacuum post-Hamas, emphasizing the need for viable alternatives to sustain stability in the region.²⁶

International Perspectives and Reactions to the ‘Operation Al-Aqsa Storm’

In the days following Hamas's unanticipated attack on Israel on October 7th, foreign leaders weighed in. Many people have condemned Hamas, while others have blamed Israel. Some have also trodden carefully by walking a fine line.

The United States, European Union, and Britain condemned Hamas's attacks and pledged support to Israel. They labeled Hamas's actions as terrorism and expressed solidarity with Israel in defending itself against such assaults. France, Germany, Italy, Britain, and the United States Issued a joint statement condemning Hamas's attacks as acts of terrorism with no justification. They vowed support for Israel's defense while recognizing legitimate Palestinian aspirations but clarifying that Hamas does not represent those aspirations. European Union initially stated support for Israel and announced a review of its support for Palestinians. It later called for restraint, condemned attacks against civilians, and emphasized a commitment to a two-state solution, urging regional engagement for de-escalation.

Countries in the Abraham Accords such as UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco expressed concern and condemned violence. UAE and Bahrain emphasized the need for de-escalation and protection of civilians.²⁷ Morocco voiced concern about attacks on civilians but had divergent opinions within its parliament regarding Hamas's actions.²⁸ Saudi Arabia called for an immediate end to violence, highlighting the dangers of continued occupation and the deprivation of Palestinian rights.²⁹ Egypt

²⁶ Robinson, Kali. “What Is Hamas?” Council on Foreign Relations, October 31, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-hamas>

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Robinson, Kali. “What Is Hamas?” Council on Foreign Relations, October 31, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-hamas>

and Jordan urged restraint, emphasized civilian protection, and advocated for a two-state solution, maintaining commitment to Arab issues and Palestinian rights.³⁰

Iran congratulated Hamas, expressing support aligned with Palestinian interests. Qatar blamed Israel for the escalation of violence.³¹ Russia expressed extreme concern, and refrained from condemning Hamas directly, but highlighted a spiral of violence and criticized the neglect of settlement mechanisms in the Middle East by the West.³² Turkey and China called for an end to violence, with Turkey offering mediation and China advocating for the implementation of a two-state solution for lasting peace.³³ India called for restraint, urged both sides to avoid escalation, and emphasized the need for peaceful dialogue and de-escalation.³⁴

Consequences and Future Implications

The ongoing war in Gaza, triggered by Hamas's surprise attack on October 7, is poised to have far-reaching repercussions on global geopolitics. Traditionally, conflicts in one part of the world tend to have limited ripple effects, but this may be an exception. While the war is unlikely to lead to World War III or a larger regional conflict, its implications are significant.

Firstly, the war disrupts the U.S.-led Saudi-Israeli normalization effort, hindering the potential deal³⁵. Secondly, it hampers U.S. efforts to shift attention from the Middle East to Asia, affecting

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Walt, Stephen M. "The World Won't Be the Same after the Israel-Hamas War." Foreign Policy, November 8, 2023. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/11/08/israel-hamas-gaza-war-geopolitics/#:~:text=But%20even%20if%20the%20war,7>.

diplomatic and military capacities³⁶. Thirdly, it proves detrimental to Ukraine, diverting resources that could aid Kyiv in its ongoing conflict with Russia³⁷. Fourthly, the war widens divisions in the European Union, undermining unity and highlighting diplomatic weaknesses³⁸. Moreover, the conflict distracts the U.S. from challenges in Asia, benefiting Russia and China, who seek a multipolar world order. The longer the war, the more significant the impact on global perceptions. Sympathy for the Palestinians grows worldwide, while selective Western attention raises concerns about hypocrisy.

Ultimately, the war becomes a test of U.S. foreign-policy competence, affecting credibility and judgment in the eyes of the international community. The unfolding tragedy in Gaza has unexpected and far-reaching consequences across different regions, reshaping diplomatic landscapes and challenging established geopolitical strategies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the Israel-Palestine conflict, deeply rooted and perpetuated for over seven decades, has reemerged prominently with the recent surprise attacks orchestrated by Hamas on October 7th, 2023. This analysis has extensively explored the conflict's historical backdrop, Hamas's profile, the unprecedented assault, and the global reactions elicited by the 'Operation Al-Aqsa Storm'. The far-reaching repercussions of this conflict extend beyond the region, profoundly impacting global geopolitics. Disrupting diplomatic endeavors, diverting attention from critical global issues, and exacerbating existing tensions within international alliances stand as noteworthy consequences. This conflict challenges established geopolitical strategies and exacerbates already complex diplomatic relations.

³⁶ Walt, Stephen M. "The World Won't Be the Same after the Israel-Hamas War." *Foreign Policy*, November 8, 2023. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/11/08/israel-hamas-gaza-war-geopolitics/#:~:text=But%20even%20if%20the%20war,7>.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

As we chart a course forward, immediate efforts must prioritize de-escalation and a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hamas. International diplomatic engagement remains paramount, fostering dialogue that respects the legitimate aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians while prioritizing the protection of civilian rights and lives. Addressing the fundamental causes of the conflict, including territorial disputes, refugee rights, and resource access, necessitates sustained international attention and proactive mediation. Preventing further conflict escalation and mitigating its global implications demand a collective commitment to fostering peace and promoting dialogue. Enhancing multilateral cooperation, fortifying regional stability, and addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza are pressing priorities. Ultimately, resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict hinges on genuine diplomatic engagement, sincere dialogue, and a shared commitment to securing a just and lasting peace for all involved parties.

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