



COMMITTEE Chair Report HRC

Discussing the breaches in human rights
in Gaza due to the current conflict.

Chair: Matthew Scholten
Deputy Chair: Filip van Putten

Personal Statements

Chair – Matthew Scholten

Honourable delegates,

My name is Matthew Scholten, and I will be your chair for the 2024 edition of MUNISS in the Human Rights Committee. I am currently nineteen years old and am from Zwolle, Netherlands.

This will be my first year as a chair abroad. In 2018, I attended my first two MUNs as a delegate: MUNISS and LmunA- working in GA4 and UNESCO respectively. In 2019, this cycle would repeat itself- but moving into the Security Council. In 2020- right before the pandemic- I was lucky enough to squeeze in one more conference at MSKMUN in Athens, Greece- also in the Security Council. Finally, my own school organized an in-house MUN called “CAPMUN”, in which I played a role as Head of Media and chaired in the General Assembly. All of this together brings the tally to six events attended, and after a few years away from these excursions, it feels only right to come back to the place where it all started.



CAPMUN, 2021

Six years onward from my first Model United Nations, I couldn't be more excited to see what the next generation of delegates brings us! I intend to run your sessions as smoothly as I can together with Filip, creating a safe space for constructive debate and dialogue.

Good luck!

Deputy Chair – Filip van Putten

Honourable attendees of MUNISS,

My name is Filip Cornelis van Putten. I'm a nineteen-year-old Dutch-Czech student of theology, currently located in Zwolle. I will serve as your deputy chair this April.

I have participated four times in MUN, my first being, in fact, MUNISS 2018. I have also participated in LMUNA, in Arnhem; FirstMUN, in Hardenberg; MSKMUN, in Athens and I have served as chair during CAPMUN, in Zwolle.

Attending MUN conferences always leaves you with valuable memories and life experience. You practice communication, problem solving, making compromises, and speaking (formal) English, if you



aren't a native speaker. And most importantly of all, you make valuable connections with great people!

It has always been a pleasure for me to attend MUN, it is a valuable experience, and you learn a lot from attending it. In our committee we are going to dedicate ourselves to protecting human rights, a worthwhile endeavour indeed. I do hope all of you, dear delegates, will have a most valuable time in our committee!



Introduction

On October 7th, 2023, an unprecedented show of aggression not seen since the 1973 Yom Kippur war, has been perpetrated by Hamas from the Gaza Strip, leaving 1,200 dead and 240 taken hostage, many of them Israelis (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024a).

From that point on, Israel has completely shut Gaza off from the rest of the world and cut off critical supplies from entering Gaza. This territory being solely dependent on Israel for critical goods like water, electricity, fuel and internet; and Israel all the while blocking access to humanitarian aid (Staff, 2024), is creating a humanitarian disaster in the enclave.

Glossary

Amnesty International. Amnesty International is an international non-governmental organization focused on human rights, with its headquarters in the United Kingdom.

Antisemitism. Hostility to or prejudice against Jewish people.

Diaspora. A large group of people who share a cultural and regional origin but are living away from their traditional homeland. This can be caused by exile, but also through voluntary means, like migration.

Enclave a portion of territory surrounded by a larger territory whose inhabitants are culturally or ethnically distinct.

Hamas. A Palestinian Islamist political and military organization

Humanitarian aid. Material and logistic assistance to people who need help.

Humanitarian disaster. A singular event or a series of events that are threatening in terms of health, safety or well-being of a community or large group of people.

Ottoman Empire. The predecessor to the modern Turkish state. This empire controlled all of Anatolia and a large part of the present-day Middle East, including what is now known as Israel and Palestine.

Palestine. The region between the Jordan river and the mediterranean sea. Also, the name Palestinians give to the region known today as Israel/Palestine.

Zionism. A nationalist movement that emerged in the 19th century to enable the establishment of a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine



Issue Explanation

The conflict between Israel and Palestine is one that goes back to the late 19th century, when Theodor Herzl gave a political turn to a concept we now know today as Zionism: A Jewish national movement with the aim to create a homeland for the Jewish people in a region, what was then widely known as Palestine (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024b). Eventually it was made possible for the Jews to create their homeland, although there were many struggles before we got the state of Israel we know today. However, the extensive history of the current conflict will be discussed later in this report.

This conflict, with all its complexities, is mostly about land: whose land it is and who can live on it. The conflict is also defined by bilateral mistrust and hurt.

Both parties, Jews as well as Palestinians, claim ancestral connection to the land dating back centuries. The Jews argue that their nation started in the land of Canaan when Abraham was led there by God (Genesis 12:1-6), making it their ancestral homeland. The problem with that theory is that after the destruction of the second temple in 70CE, the Jews were scattered throughout the world into the diaspora we now know today. The Palestinians however are ethnic Arabs who have lived under rule of the Islamic caliphates right up to the last caliphate: the Ottoman empire. Who has the right to call Palestine their territory? The Jews who might have lived there centuries ago, but got exiled? Or the Palestinians who lived there till modern times?

How does this relate to Gaza? Well, the current humanitarian crisis comes from a fundamental mistrust between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Both seem to not be able to share the country (Grossman, 2023, p.12). The Israelis fear for antisemitic terrorist attacks on their home soil, a fear proven to be reasonable through centuries of oppression and racism. The Palestinians see the Israeli state as yet another form of western imperialism, of an apartheid regime. Couple that with some 50 years of war and you get a region where mistrust and hate is woven in the very fabric of the country.

This is why Israel has hermetically sealed Gaza away in what has been appropriately called the world's largest open-air prison. Hamas' winning of the election caused Israel to declare Gaza to be under a hostile entity, causing the blockade in the autumn of 2007.

Whether one thinks Israel's concerns for Hamas, which is in full honest a terrorist organization with track record of extrajudicial murder, torture and (sexual-) violence (Grossman, 2023, p.10 & Wie over vrede spreekt, heeft moed, 2024, pp.74-75), are justified or not, it is a fact that, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) (*Crisis in The Occupied Palestinian Territory*, n.d.), the population of Gaza is in crisis:

- More than three quarters of Gaza's 2.2 million people are internally displaced
- The entire population is affected by hunger
- The health system is on its knees
- A lack of clean water raises risk of infection



- For the 73,000 pregnant women in Gaza, there is a lack of proper medical equipment, nourishment and with the rampant violence there is a threat of displacement, disease and even death.

Furthermore, according to Amnesty International (2024), Israel has failed to comply to the International Court of Justice ruling to: "protect Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip from the risk of genocide by ensuring sufficient humanitarian assistance and enabling basic services", by refusing to lift restriction on the entry of life saving goods, among others.



History of the Topic

A lot of people will claim this conflict goes back centuries, but that is not accurate. This conflict started in the late 19th century or the early 20th century, around the time when the Ottoman empire lost the first world war and the region now known as Palestine came under British rule.

The British incited an insurrection among the Arabs of the Hejaz (western coast of the modern KSA) by promising the Arabs independence if the Ottomans would lose the war (Palmer & Colton, 1984, p.675). While the British sabotaged the Ottomans by bolstering Pan-Arab nationalism and promising independence to the Arabs, they also promised Palestine to the Zionists.

Zionists are Jews who subscribe to Theodor Herzl's political vision of a homeland for the Jewish nation. Throughout much of history Jews have been persecuted and excluded for society. For a time, Jews thought it best to assimilate as best as they can, this worked for some time and even freed a lot of Jews from old legal discriminations that had been imposed on them for centuries. But on the dawn of the 20th century two tendencies disrupted the assimilation progress of European Jews: a cultural and political nationalism, originating out of a fear for losing the Jewish identity and faith and the rise of anti-Semitism. This caused the Jews to reject assimilation and strive for emancipation, out of this desire the Zionist movement was born among (Palmer & Colton, 1984, p.602).

The Zionists had friends in high places, one of these friends was the British foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour. This British statesman sympathized with the Zionist cause and in 1917 promised "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people. (Van Midden, 2022, p.89)"

Even before the Balfour declaration, there were Jews emigrating to Palestine, mainly because of the Pogroms in Russia (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024d). But the number of emigrants exploded in the aftermath of the Holocaust (Elath et al., 2024), since the genocide of the Jews signaled even more that the Jews needed a state of their own (Van Midden, 2022, p.90; Van Der Heijden, 2008, p.58)

The Arabs objected to making territorial sacrifices to the Jews. To placate the Arabs, the British limited the number of Jewish immigrants. However, with the onset of the second world war, and with that the holocaust, the Jews didn't take no for an answer and resisted the British. Eventually the British handed the issue over to the UN, who in 1947 voted for partition: a creation of a Jewish state and an Arab state in the region of Palestine (Palmer & Colton, 1984, p.870). A year later, on May 14th, 1948, the state of Israel was proclaimed.

The very next day Israel's neighbors declared war, which Israel eventually won, increasing its territory by about half of the original territory of Israel (Palmer & Colton, 1984, p.870). Over the next 35 years Israel would fight more wars, and win: the 1956 Suez Crisis (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998), 1967 six-day war (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024b) and the 1973 Yom Kippur war (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024c).



Any Previous Attempts

Previous resolutions are the following, but not limited to:

- UN Resolution ES-10/21: Criticizing Hamas' actions on October 7th (*A/RES/ES-10/21*, 2023).
- UN Resolution 242: Urging Israel to withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict (*S/RES/242(1967)*, 1967) (*S/RES/242(1967)*, 1967).
- UN Resolution 338: This resolution called for an immediate ceasefire so that the negotiated changes called for in resolution 242 can be implemented (*S/RES/338(1973)*, 1973).
- UN Resolution 194: This resolution addresses, among other things, the right for Palestinians to return to their homes.
- UN Resolution 2334: This resolution condemns the illegal Israel settlement activity in the Palestinian territory (*S/RES/2334(2016)*, 2016.).



Media Contribution

Ever since the October 7th attack, a lot has been said about the conflict. In general, directly after the attacks, there was a lot of sympathetic noise coming from the international community. But as the siege on Gaza continued, the international community's opinion soured. We can see this trend in the historic accusation of South Africa, that Israel is maintaining an apartheid regime.



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