

STUDY GUIDE



UNHRC
HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE
PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

SUMMARY

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1) INTRODUCTION

Hello, fellow delegates! I sincerely hope that everyone is having good and healthy times in these hard days we are going through. You are currently reading the study guide of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) committee for the Kdz. Ereğli Ted College Model United Nations (KETMUN). For those of you who do not know, MUN is basically a simulation of the United Nations. The events are mostly organized for high school or college students. Each participant has their own role such as delegate, chair, vice chair, crisis team member and so on. With that being a fact not every participant has the same aims in a conference. Nevertheless, we can count three issues that MUN aims all the participants to develop at: communication, international diplomacy, globalization. In case you skipped the summary, which most likely is the case, our study guide consists of six main parts. It begins with the introduction which is what you are in the middle of. The aims of this part are to welcome you, give you an overall information about the guide and address the basics of MUN, for those who might need. In the second part you will see what United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is, what is its path, the issues discussed in it in simple terms. The third part is basically a summary of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as you could have guessed from its name. To discuss the human rights in that conflict, you must know what the conflict was, what it is and what could it turn into? The more information you have in your head, the easier it is for you to carry on till the end of each session. After the third part, it comes to our main issue. The part where the role of the human rights come in. However, this is just a guide so that you will not be able to find enough information about the human rights in the conflict after you read the fourth part. In fact, you will find no information that could come in handy for you during the session times. You will gain that kind of information and ideas in your own research. As you know, there should be a resolution paper at the end of the committee. As a matter of fact, this is the grand goal for each committee to achieve. If the committee can not come up with a resolution, that means the failure of that committee. If you try to find answers to the questions that are written in the fifth part, it will be easier for you to contribute to the resolution. As for the last part, you will be able to see the sources that were used to write this guide. Those sources might be useful if you are not sure where to start your research. Even so, we would not recommend you to be satisfied with those. As mentioned before, the more information you have in your head, the easier it is for you to carry on till the end of each session. Remarking one more time that this document is meant to be nothing more than a guide to provide assist but not direct information to you. Each delegate should do their own research on their own based on what country they present and that countries policy. After all that said, do not forget to enjoy yourself and meet new friends during KETMUN.

2) UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (UNHRC)

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all human rights. The Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and international human rights laws and treaties established those rights.

UN Human Rights was created by the General Assembly in 1993 through its resolution 41/141 which also details its mandate.

UN Human Rights is mandated:

- Promote and protect all human rights for all.
- Recommend that bodies of the UN system improve the promotion and protection of all human rights.
- Promote and protect the right to development.
- Provide technical assistance to States for human rights activities.
- Coordinate UN human rights education and public information programs.
- Work actively to remove obstacles to the realization of human rights and to prevent the continuation of human rights violations.
- Engage in dialogue with Governments in order to secure respect for all human rights.
- Enhance international cooperation for the promotion and protection of all human rights.
- Coordinate human rights promotion and protection activities throughout the United Nations system.
- Rationalize, adapt, strengthen and streamline the UN human rights machinery.

3) ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

a) DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

I. Militia

A military force that is raised from the civil population to supplement a regular army in an emergency and engages in rebel or terrorist activities in opposition to a regular army.

II. Holocaust

A destruction or slaughter on a mass scale, especially caused by fire or nuclear war.

III. PLO

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is an organization founded in 1964 with the purpose of the "liberation of Palestine" through armed struggle, with much of its violence aimed at Israeli civilians.

IV. Intifada

The Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The first intifada lasted from 1987 to 1993, and the second began in 2000. The Arabic word intifada translates literally as 'shake', 'shaking' or 'shake off'.

V. Hamas

Hamas is a Palestinian Sunni-Islamic fundamentalist but pragmatic, militant and nationalist organization.



b) A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT

One of the biggest myths about the Israel-Palestine conflict is that it's been going on for centuries, that this is all about ancient religious hatreds. In fact, while religion is involved, the conflict is mostly about two groups of people who claim the same land. And it really only goes back about a century, to the early 1900s. Around then, the region along the eastern Mediterranean we now call Israel-Palestine had been under Ottoman rule for centuries. It was religiously diverse, including mostly Muslims and Christians but also a small number of Jews, who lived generally in peace. And it was changing in two important ways. First, more people in the region were developing a sense of being not just ethnic Arabs but Palestinians, a distinct national identity. At the same time, not so far away in Europe, more Jews were joining a movement called Zionism, which said that Judaism was not just a religion but a nationality, one that deserved a nation of its own. And after centuries of persecution, many believed a Jewish state was their only way of safety. And they saw their historic homeland in the Middle East as their best hope for establishing it. In the first decades of the 20th century, tens of thousands of European Jews moved there. After World War One, the Ottoman Empire collapsed, and the British and French Empires carved up the Middle East, with the British taking control of a region it called the British Mandate for Palestine. At first, the British allowed Jewish immigration. But as more Jews arrived, settling into farming communes, tension between Jews and Arabs grew. Both sides committed acts of violence. And by the 1930s, the British began limiting Jewish immigration. In response, Jewish militias formed to fight both the local Arabs and to resist British rule. Then came the Holocaust, leading many more Jews to flee Europe for British Palestine, and galvanizing much of the world in support of a Jewish state. In 1947, as sectarian violence between Arabs and Jews there grew, the United Nations approved a plan to divide British Palestine into two separate states: one for Jews, Israel, and one for Arabs, Palestine. The city of Jerusalem, where Jews, Muslims, and Christians all have holy sites, it was to become a special international zone. The plan was meant to give Jews a state, to establish Palestinian independence, and to end the sectarian violence that the British could no longer control. The Jews accepted the plan and declared independence as Israel. But Arabs throughout the region saw the UN plan as just more European colonialism trying to steal their land. Many of the Arab states, who had just recently won independence themselves, declared war on Israel in an effort to establish a unified Arab Palestine where all of British Palestine had been. The new state of Israel won the war. But in the process, they pushed well past their borders under the UN plan, taking the western half of Jerusalem and much of the land that was to have been part of Palestine. They also expelled huge numbers of Palestinians from their homes, creating a massive refugee population whose descendants today number about 7 million.

At the end of the war, Israel controlled all of the territory except for Gaza, which Egypt controlled, and the West Bank, named because it's west of the Jordan River, which Jordan controlled. This was the beginning of the decades-long Arab-Israeli conflict. During this period, many Jews in Arab-majority countries fled or were expelled, arriving in Israel. Then something happened that transformed the conflict. In 1967, Israel and the neighboring Arab states fought another war. When it ended, Israel had seized the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank from Jordan, and both Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. Israel was now occupying the Palestinian territories, including all of Jerusalem and its holy sites. This left Israel responsible for governing the Palestinians – a people it had fought for decades. In 1978 Israel and Egypt signed the US-brokered Camp David Accords and shortly after that, Israel gave Sinai back to Egypt as part of a peace treaty. At the time this was hugely controversial in the Arab world. Egypt President Anwar Sadat was assassinated in part because of outrage against it. But it marked the beginning of the end of the wider Arab-Israeli conflict. Over the next few decades, the other Arab states gradually made peace with Israel, even if they never signed formal peace treaties. But Israel's military was still occupying the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza, and this was when the conflict became an Israeli-Palestinian struggle. The Palestinian Liberation Organization, which had formed in the 1960s to seek a Palestinian state, fought against Israel, including through acts of terrorism. Initially, the PLO claimed all of what had been British Palestine, meaning it wanted to end the state of Israel entirely. Fighting between Israel and the PLO went on for years, even including a 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon to kick the group out of Beirut. The PLO later said it would accept dividing the land between Israel and Palestine, but the conflict continued. As all of this was happening, something was changing in the Israel-occupied Palestinian territories: Israelis were moving in. These people are called settlers, and they made their homes in the West Bank and Gaza whether Palestinians wanted them or not. Some moved for religious reasons, some because they want to claim the land for Israel, and some just because housing is cheap — and often subsidized by the Israeli government. Some settlements are cities with thousands of people; others are small communities deep into the West Bank. The settlers are followed by soldiers to guard them, and the growing settlements force Palestinians off of their land and divide communities. Short-term, they make the occupation harder for Palestinians. Long-term, by dividing up Palestinian land, they make it more difficult for the Palestinians to ever have an independent state. Today there are several 6 hundred thousand settlers in occupied territory even though the international community considers them illegal. By the late 1980s, Palestinian frustration exploded into the Intifada, which is the Arabic word for uprising. It began with mostly protests and boycotts but soon became violent, and Israel responded with heavy force. A couple hundred Israelis and over a thousand Palestinians died in the first Intifada. Around the same time, a group of Palestinians in Gaza, who consider the PLO too secular and too compromise-minded, created Hamas, a violent extremist group dedicated to Israel's destruction

By the early 1990s, it's clear that Israelis and Palestinians have to make peace, and leaders from both sides sign the Oslo Accords. This is meant to be the big, first step toward Israel maybe someday withdrawing from the Palestinian territories, and allowing an independent Palestine. The Oslo Accords establish the Palestinian Authority, allowing Palestinians a little bit of freedom to govern themselves in certain areas. Hard-liners on both sides opposed the Oslo accords. Members of Hamas launch suicide bombings to try to sabotage the process. The Israeli right protests peace talks, with ralliers calling Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin a traitor and a Nazi. Not long after Rabin signs the second round of Oslo Accords, a far-right Israeli shoots him to death in Tel Aviv. This violence showed how the extremists on both sides can use violence to derail peace, and keep a permanent conflict going as they seek the other side's total destruction. That's how things have been around ever since. Negotiations meant to hammer out the final details on peace drag on for years, and a big Camp David Summit in 2000 comes up empty. Palestinians come to believe that peace isn't coming, and rise up in a Second Intifada, this one much more violent than the first. By the time it wound down a few years later, about 1,000 Israelis and 3,200 Palestinians had died. The Second Intifada really changes the conflict. Israelis become much more skeptical that Palestinians will ever accept peace, or that it's even worth trying. Israeli politics shift right, and the country builds walls and checkpoints to control Palestinians' movements. They're not really trying to solve the conflict anymore, just manage it. The Palestinians are left feeling like negotiating didn't work and violence didn't work, that they're stuck under an ever-growing occupation with no future as a people. That year, Israel withdraws from Gaza. Hamas gains power but splits from the Palestinian Authority in a short civil war, dividing Gaza from the West Bank. Israel puts Gaza under a suffocating blockade, and unemployment rises to 40%. This is the state of the conflict as we know it today. It's relatively new, and it's unbearable for Palestinians. In the West Bank, more and more settlements are smothering Palestinians, who often respond with protests and sometimes with violence, though most just want normal lives. In Gaza, Hamas and other violent groups have periodic wars with Israel. The fighting overwhelmingly kills Palestinians, including lots of civilians. In Israel itself, most people have become apathetic, and for the most part the occupation keeps the conflict relatively removed from their daily lives, with moments of brief but horrible violence. There's little political will for peace.

No one knows what sort of a state things will come to.

c) IMPORTANT EVENTS

- Establishment of British Mandate for Palestine (1920)
- United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine (1947)
- Britain's withdrawal from the Mandatory Palestine (1948)
- Arab-Israeli War (1948-1949)
- Six-Day War (1967)
- Camp David Accords (1978)
- Lebanon War (1982)
- First Intifada (1987-1993)
- Oslo Accords (1993)
- Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin (1995)
- The 2000 Camp David Summit (2000)
- Second Intifada (2000-2005)
- Israeli's withdrawal from Gaza (2005)

4) THE POSITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE REGION

The violation of many human rights in the region is an unarguable fact. Doesn't matter from which side they are from, people are facing various types of violence unwillingly. Children, women, elders, the defenseless and so on... In order this guide not to deviate from its aim and stay objective, there will not be examples of the violations. Both sides have in some ways committed crimes but we are neither here to expose nor blame any side. Each side might naturally believe what they do is the right thing. However no matter for what cause it is, violation of human rights are not acceptable. Considering this inadmissible case is still ongoing, our priority is to stop the violation of the human rights in the region and find a permanent solution so that things will never turn back to what they are right now.

5) POINTS THE RESOLUTION SHOULD DISCUSS

- Could there be a way to prevent the attacks on civilians and civil areas?
- Could there be a way to evacuate those who are not soldiers from the region?
- Could there be a commission to moderate both sides, preventing the illegal moves?
- Are there any groups with an influence that keeps the conflict going and is there a way to block that influence if there are?
- Do those countries who are related in some ways to this situation really put efforts to establish peace or are they behaving manipulatively?

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