

Situation Report  
May 2024

# POLITICAL AND MILITARY IMPLICATIONS OF THE HAMAS – ISRAEL CONFLICT



**POLITICAL AND MILITARY  
IMPLICATIONS OF THE  
HAMAS – ISRAEL CONFLICT**  
(November 2023 - April 2024)

Situation Report

Part II





## **PRESIDENT**

Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd)

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

Ambassador Muhammad Haroon Shaukat (Retd)

Naba Fatima

## **EDITOR**

Jawad Zulfiqar

**CENTRE for AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES**

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# Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
CURRENT STATUS OF CONFLICT	2
WAR IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF GAZA	6
WAR IN THE WEST BANK	14
ESCALATION OF WAR BEYOND ISRAELI BORDERS	16
ISRAEL-IRAN STRIKES	22
MILITARY TECHNOLOGY: EXCELLENT BUT NOT DECISIVE	25
HUMANITARIAN DIMENSION	27
GENOCIDE AND INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE VERDICTS	34
PARALYSIS OF THE UNITED NATION SECURITY COUNCIL	35
INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS	38
ASSESSMENT	49
RECOMMENDATIONS	54
BIBLIOGRAPHY	



## INTRODUCTION

Ever since the hostilities commenced on October 7, Israel has been relentlessly carrying out a veritable campaign of genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza. By the end of April 2024, the death toll had crossed 34,596. The indiscriminate and massive destruction of the infrastructure has rendered the Gaza Strip uninhabitable. According to the UN's Assistant Secretary-General Abdallah al-Dardari, Gaza would require a post-conflict rebuilding effort not seen since World War II, which could cost over \$40 billion. However, the true picture of devastation in Gaza will emerge once the Israeli murderous campaign comes to a halt.

Israel is opposed to the idea of an independent State of Palestine next to it. But Hamas has valiantly faced the Israeli onslaught for nearly seven months and has not been defeated. Israel, on the other hand, is facing failure on most fronts and is particularly losing the battle of hearts and minds on the university campuses across the United States and in the streets of Europe.

By the end of April 2024, the international community had miserably failed to stop the Israeli war machine. The extreme hard-liner elements in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition wish to

see an extermination of the Palestinians in Gaza. So far, ceasefire talks facilitated by regional nations have not succeeded. The US does not want to be dragged into Israel's war. Nor does it wish to see this conflict spiral out of control. However, in an election year, the US administration is unwilling to relent on its ironclad support to Israel.

This report explores the progression of the gory conflict, with reference to the ineffective efforts to implement a ceasefire, international reactions, as well as the military dimensions of the ongoing war in Gaza. This report also highlights how the use of artificial intelligence (AI) by Israel has contributed significantly to the unprecedented death toll in the war and how it has been deployed for strategic impact, altering the traditional battlefield landscape.

This analysis offers a holistic understanding of the multifaceted conflict, placing it within a broader global context while tracing its impact on regional dynamics and national security. The study provides a well-considered assessment and also makes policy recommendations.

## **CURRENT STATUS OF CONFLICT**

More than seven months have passed since the start of the Hamas-Israel conflict on October 7 2023. After the surprise multipronged blitz by Hamas, Israel

began its brutal air and ground offensive in the Gaza Strip against Hamas. By the end of 2023, the brutal Israeli offensive claimed 21,822 Palestinian lives while the number of injured rose to 56,451.

Since the beginning of 2024, the Israeli Defence Forces' (IDF) ground operations somewhat decreased in severity. However, Israeli airstrikes have continued daily. By the end of January 2024, combat and shelling in Deir al Balah and Eastern Rafah remained especially intense<sup>1</sup>.



Figure 1: Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh

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<sup>1</sup> 'Five Months of War: Where Israel, Hamas, and the U.S. Stand', Council on Foreign Relations, accessed 3 May 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/five-months-war-where-israel-hamas-and-us-stand>.

Since October 2023, about two million Gazans — more than 85 percent of the population — have left their homes and have been displaced. By the end of April, Israeli attacks on Gaza had resulted in 34,596 Palestinian deaths and 77,816 injuries; 70 percent of those injured were women and children.<sup>2</sup>

While Hamas has valiantly taken the war to its seventh month, Israel's military campaign in Gaza has somewhat debilitated it. According to Western sources, many Hamas brigades have been weakened and a significant number of their members have been killed, curtailing Hamas' capabilities after months of intense fighting. However, Hamas has survived against all odds and has not been defeated. It continues to engage the Israeli forces, and still remains the strongest player in Gaza after Israel's withdrawal. On the other hand, Israel has not achieved its primary goals in the war i.e., freeing hostages and fully destroying Hamas.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Alastair McCreedy Adler Stephen Quillen,Nils, 'Israel War on Gaza | Live Updates | Today's Latest from Al Jazeera', Al Jazeera, accessed 2 May 2024,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2024/5/2/israels-war-on-gaza-live-israel-still-denying-aid-to-north-gaza-says-un/>.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Stark Reality of Israel's Fight in Gaza - The New York Times', accessed 13 May 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/22/us/politics/israel-gaza-hamas-war.html>.



According to reports, the estimated strength of the 'Qassam Brigades' ranged between 30,000 to 40,000 fighters at the start of the conflict. The most conservative estimates posit that before the conflict, the force maintained a minimum of 18,000<sup>4</sup> proficient, disciplined, and ideologically committed frontline soldiers.

How many Hamas fighters have been killed by the IDF remains shrouded in mystery. Israeli authorities claim to have killed almost 14,000 Hamas soldiers. According to reports quoting Israeli sources, there are more than 4,000 Hamas soldiers still active in Rafah<sup>5</sup>.

According to an assessment reportedly conducted by the Israeli military and reported by The New York Times, during their assault, Hamas militants killed around 1,200 Israelis, about 70 percent of them civilians, and took roughly 240 hostages. While Hamas freed more than 100 hostages under a weeklong cease-fire deal in November 2023, it is

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<sup>4</sup> Zoran Kusovac, 'Analysis: Is the Israeli Army as Militarily Successful as It Claims?', Al Jazeera, accessed 3 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/1/analysis-is-the-israeli-army-as-militarily-successful-as-it-claims>.

<sup>5</sup> "'There's Only Been Losers and We Need to Cut Our Losses': How Does Israel Actually End This War?", ABC News, 10 May 2024, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-05-11/israels-war-aims-in-gaza-remain-elusive/103829854>.

believed to be holding some 136 people captive.<sup>6</sup> Some Western observers believe that 32 of the hostages may have died. Israeli authorities have kept a strict silence on their casualties and losses to their military assets.

Israel has been destroying or blocking Hamas' underground tunnel networks. However, it appears that Hamas still maintains enough underground facilities to move forces between the frontlines to flank and surprise the enemy. This is evident from certain reports indicating that Hamas fighters have already moved from Rafah into Khan Younis to evade the looming operation by the IDF<sup>7</sup>.

## **WAR IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF GAZA**

By the start of November 2023, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza assumed alarming proportions. Israel continued a complete siege of the strip, denying the Palestinians food, water, fuel, and power, thus exacerbating the existing inhumane conditions of the inhabitants. While the international community clamoured for the provision of humanitarian assistance in Gaza, Israeli authorities did not relent.

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<sup>6</sup> 'The Israel-Hamas War: The Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza', Council on Foreign Relations, accessed 13 May 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/israel-hamas-war-humanitarian-crisis-gaza>.

<sup>7</sup> "There's Only Been Losers and We Need to Cut Our Losses".

## Foreigners Leave Gaza

Under terms negotiated by Egypt, Hamas, and Israel, the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt opened on November 1 to permit approximately 7,000<sup>8</sup> individual possessing foreign passports to leave the region for the first time since 7 October. However, the vast majority of Gaza's residents remained trapped in the enclave, in extremely difficult and inhumane conditions.



*Figure 2: Rafah Border Crossing*

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<sup>8</sup> 'Rafah Border Crossing between Gaza and Egypt Opens for Limited Evacuation | Israel-Gaza War | The Guardian', accessed 8 May 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/01/israel-hamas-war-gaza-injured-egypt-rafah-crossing>.

## Israel Siege of Shifa Hospital

On 15 November, Israeli military forces entered Al Shifa, the largest hospital in Gaza City, following a prolonged siege. Throughout this period, medical personnel reported instances of patient fatalities, including newborns, attributed to the lack of electricity and essential supplies.



Figure 3: Al Shifa Hospital

The IDF asserted that the hospital premises harboured an underground headquarters for Palestinian militants, an allegation refuted by the hospital staff. Subsequently, the military conducted an inspection of a tunnel located on the hospital grounds. Shortly thereafter, all medical facilities serving the northern region of Gaza ceased operations.

The Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, expressed profound concern over the military intervention within the hospital premises.

### **Temporary Truce**

On 22 November, Israel's war cabinet reached a consensus to engage in a prisoner exchange negotiation with Hamas, facilitated by Qatar and Egypt<sup>9</sup>. This exchange was scheduled to align with a brief cessation of hostilities. Over the course of this seven-day ceasefire, 110 hostages were released in return for the liberation of 240 Palestinian detainees.

### **Assault in Southern Gaza**

After the resumption of hostilities around the first week of December, Israeli military forces advanced into Khan Younis, the most populated city in the southern region of the Gaza Strip and alleged to be the stronghold of Hamas. This area notably included the residences of prominent Hamas leaders, including Yahya Sinwar and Mohammed Deif.

The IDF unleashed widespread devastation upon Khan Younis, resulting in significant civilian casualties due to their relentless bombardment. Among the most tragic incidents reported by the Office for the

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<sup>9</sup> 'The Secret Negotiations That Led to the Gaza Hostages Deal | Reuters', accessed 8 May 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/secret-negotiations-that-led-gaza-hostages-deal-2023-11-22/>.

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) were the deaths of two children who were tragically killed while riding a bicycle<sup>10</sup>. The indiscriminate nature of the attacks exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation in the area.

This unrelenting bombardment of Khan Younis led to a large number of civilians fleeing to Rafah, one of the last areas in the enclave for civilians to shelter from the ground invasion, and within weeks more than half of the Gaza Strip's total population had crammed into the city along Egypt's border.

### **Israel Kills Three Hostages**

On 15 December, Israeli forces inadvertently caused the deaths of three hostages in Gaza, asserting that it was unintentional. This event triggered substantial scrutiny within Israel regarding the manner in which the conflict was being conducted, notwithstanding the ongoing widespread domestic backing for the campaign.

### **Assault on Central Gaza**

On approximately 26<sup>th</sup> of December, Israeli military forces launched a significant ground offensive targeting regions within the central Gaza Strip. This incursion ensued after a succession of aerial

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<sup>10</sup> 'What Is the Situation in Gaza's Khan Younis as Israel Intensifies Attacks?', Al Jazeera, accessed 8 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/12/what-is-the-situation-in-gazas-khan-younis-as-israel-intensifies-attacks>.

bombardments, resulting once more in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of individuals, many of whom were already displaced<sup>11</sup>.

An estimated 150,000 Palestinians were forced to flee areas of central Gaza, the UN said, as Israeli forces advance on refugee camps in Bureij and nearby Nuseirat and Maghazi camps.

### **Pull Back of the Troops**

At the start of 2024, nearly three months since the start of the conflict, Israel found itself under significant international censure and condemnation due to the extensive civilian casualties and widespread devastation witnessed in the Gaza Strip. Consequently, Israel opted to alter its operational strategy, adopting a more focused approach, and subsequently withdrew a portion of its military forces from Gaza. By the end of January, the average daily fatality rate had decreased to one-third of its previous levels observed in October, yet surpassed that of any conflict recorded in the 21st Century<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Nidal Al-Mughrabi et al., 'Israel Pounds Central Gaza, Thousands of Palestinians Try to Escape', *Reuters*, 27 December 2023, sec. Middle East, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/vessel-near-yemen-said-report-drones-explosions-red-sea-2023-12-26/>.

<sup>12</sup> 'Oxfam GB | Daily Death Rate in Gaza Higher than Any Other Major 21st Century Conflict - Oxfam', Oxfam GB, 11 January 2024, <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/media/press-releases/daily-death-rate-in-gaza-higher-than-any-other-major-21st-century-conflict-oxfam/>.

## **Israel's Rejection of Diplomatic Overtures**

In late January, a mediation effort involving Qatar, Egypt, and the US resulted in the emergence of a proposed framework aimed at potentially halting the ongoing conflict in three phases. This framework envisioned a temporary cessation of hostilities to facilitate the negotiations for a comprehensive agreement to end the war. A key aspect of this proposal was the gradual release of hostages held in the Gaza Strip and Palestinian prisoners detained by Israel since the conflict's inception. Despite these efforts, the framework remained elusive, as Israel rebuffed the notion of a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.

In February, Israeli officials announced their intention to extend military operations into Rafah, raising international concerns about the significant humanitarian toll such an escalation could exact. Prime Minister Netanyahu maintained that an invasion of Rafah was necessary to eliminate what he referred to as "the last bastion" of Palestinian militant groups. However, this stance exacerbated tensions between Netanyahu and US President Joe Biden, who contemplated withholding military support should an invasion proceed.

## **The Flour Massacre**

On 29<sup>th</sup> of February, over 100 individuals from Gaza lost their lives while waiting in line for humanitarian assistance, amidst the presence of Israeli forces who



discharged firearms. This tragic event stands as one of the most devastating incidents during the conflict. The occurrence took place on al-Rashid Street, specifically at the Nabulsi Roundabout located on the south-western outskirts of Gaza City, an area where supplies of food were notably limited<sup>13</sup>.

### **Israel Bombs Aid Convoy**

On 1 April, several vehicles transporting aid workers affiliated with Chef José Andrés's World Central Kitchen fell victim to an Israeli airstrike. Tragically, seven workers lost their lives in this attack, prompting intensified scrutiny of the IDF actions amidst the escalating humanitarian situation in Gaza. The IDF acknowledged responsibility for the fatalities, with a government spokesperson characterising the event as "a lamentable series of mistakes".

### **Looming Rafah Offensive**

At the end of April, Israel appeared to be steadfastly moving towards the ground offensive in Rafah, despite persistent warnings from its principal ally, the US. Despite diplomatic pressure and numerous warnings from President Biden that the US would stop the supplies of arms if Israel started Rafah

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<sup>13</sup> 'Flour Massacre: How Gaza Food Killings Unfolded, and Israel's Story Changed | Israel War on Gaza News | Al Jazeera', accessed 9 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/1/flour-massacre-how-gaza-food-killings-unfolded-and-israels-story-changed>.

offensive, Netanyahu's resolve to pursue military action remained palpable.

## **WAR IN THE WEST BANK**

Following Israel's unprecedented military campaign in Gaza, the occupied West Bank has been placed under lockdown by Israeli military check posts and road closures. There has also been increasing violence across the West Bank, marked by Israeli army incursions and almost daily attacks carried out by the settlers. By 30 January, the UN recorded 370 deaths and 477 settler attacks in the West Bank and East Jerusalem since the war started.<sup>14</sup> By the first week of April 2024, the death toll had risen to 456<sup>15</sup>. Also, there have been over 7,350 arrests of West Bank Palestinians by Israeli authorities<sup>16</sup>. These detentions, marked by unlawful procedures, have subjected thousands of Palestinians to egregious abuses at the hands of their Israeli captors.

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<sup>14</sup> Alessandra Bajec, 'Israel's War on Gaza Is Strangling the West Bank's Economy', <https://www.newarab.com/> (The New Arab, 1 February 2024), <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/israels-war-gaza-strangling-west-banks-economy>.

<sup>15</sup> 'Half a Year into the War in Gaza, Here's a Look at the Conflict by the Numbers | AP News', accessed 13 May 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-gaza-war-statistics-95a6407fac94e9d589be234708cd5005>.

<sup>16</sup> 'More than 7,350 West Bank Palestinians Arrested by Israel during Gaza War | Israel War on Gaza News | Al Jazeera', accessed 3 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/3/22/israel-arrested-over-7350-west-bank-palestinians-since-war-on-gaza-began>.



Figure 4: Israeli forces at Al-Aqsa Mosque

As the conflict intensifies, reports of heightened harassment by Israeli forces have emerged, with instances of arson targeting Palestinian properties and alarming upticks in settler raids on Palestinian homes<sup>17</sup>. The devastating impact of Israeli military raids, often employing bulldozers to demolish Palestinian homes, underscores the magnitude of destruction inflicted upon Palestinian communities in certain areas of the West Bank<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> 'The Take: As Missiles Fly above, Settler Violence Surges in the West Bank', Al Jazeera, accessed 3 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/podcasts/2024/4/17/the-take-as-missiles-fly-above-settler-violence-surges-in-the-west-bank>.

<sup>18</sup> 'Israeli Raids Cause "Worst Destruction in Decades" in Tulkarem', Al Jazeera, accessed 3 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/newsfeed/2024/4/19/israeli-raids-cause-worst-destruction-in-decades-in-tulkarem>.

Despite international calls for restraint and de-escalation, Israel persists in its expansionist agenda, continuing to occupy and construct settlements on Palestinian land. Recent developments have seen the confiscation of vast swathes of Palestinian territory, exemplified by the seizure of 800 hectares of land<sup>19</sup>, further entrenching the cycle of dispossession and disenfranchisement faced by the Palestinian people.

## **ESCALATION OF WAR BEYOND ISRAELI BORDERS**

The recent conflict in Gaza has reverberated far beyond the borders of Israel, extending its ramifications into what the Western world identifies as Iran's "axis of resistance". This coalition encompasses groups such as the Houthis in Yemen and Hizbollah in Lebanon, both of which have historical ties and ideological alignment with Iran. The involvement of these groups highlights the intricate web of regional dynamics at play in the Middle East and shows the risk of a continuous Israel-Hamas war. By joining forces and showing solidarity with Hamas in Gaza against unrelenting Israeli aggression, these entities have effectively expanded the scope of the conflict, amplifying its impact and complexity. In

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<sup>19</sup> 'Israel Seizes 800 Hectares of Palestinian Land in Occupied West Bank | Occupied West Bank News | Al Jazeera', accessed 3 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/22/israel-seizes-800-hectares-of-palestinian-land-in-occupied-west-bank>.

addition, the Israeli-Iran strikes added yet another dangerous dimension to this conflict with serious implications for regional and international peace and security.

### **Hezbollah's Role**

Daily occurrences of cross-border artillery exchanges and drone assaults between Israeli forces and Hezbollah combatants have sparked a new theatre in Israel's ongoing conflict. Subsequently, tens of thousands residing along the border have been compelled to evacuate their residences. According to a United Nations report, Israeli offensives in southern Lebanon have claimed the lives of over 200 Hezbollah combatants, civilians, and journalists, displacing upwards of 80,000 individuals. Conversely, Hezbollah strikes have resulted in the deaths of at least 15 Israelis and displaced some 80,000 Israelis in Northern Israel<sup>20</sup>.

Hezbollah asserts that its assaults constitute acts of solidarity with the besieged 2.3 million inhabitants of Gaza, enduring relentless Israeli airstrikes, and ground offensives. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has cautioned Hezbollah against cross-border incursions, vowing to replicate Gaza's plight in Beirut. While Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has

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<sup>20</sup> Seth G. Jones et al., 'The Coming Conflict with Hezbollah', 21 March 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/coming-conflict-hezbollah>.

refrained from declaring outright war, he has asserted his forces' readiness to engage if necessary<sup>21</sup>.

Hezbollah's soldiers have battled in Iraq and, most recently, in Syria, thus they are battle-hardened. Hezbollah possesses about 150,000 rockets<sup>22</sup> with a variety of ranges that are capable of seriously damaging Israeli cities. Therefore, Hezbollah is a formidable organisation that could cause serious damage to Israel's security if Israel's belligerence in Gaza does not stop.

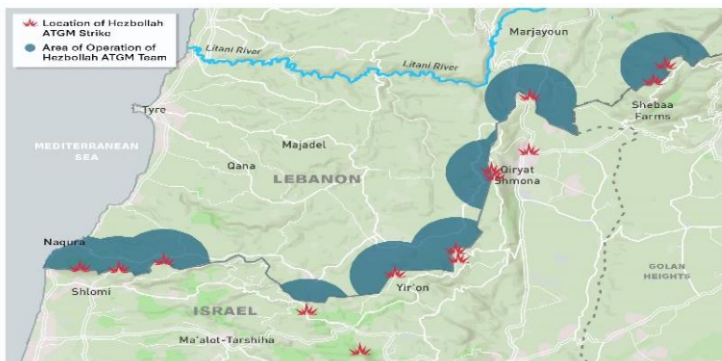


Figure 5: Hezbollah's Operations

<sup>21</sup> 'Israel-Hamas Updates: Nasrallah Says Not Afraid of War after Beirut Attack | Israel War on Gaza News | Al Jazeera', accessed 3 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2024/1/3/israel-hamas-war-live-hezbollah-vows-revenge-for-israeli-strike-on-beirut>.

<sup>22</sup> Jones et al., 'The Coming Conflict with Hezbollah'.

## **Role of Houthis**

The Iran-backed Houthi group in Yemen has been targeting commercial and military ships linked to Israel in the Red Sea as a response to Israel's war in Gaza. Houthi officials have demanded that Israel stop the war and allow humanitarian aid to enter the Palestinian enclave. The group's first attack occurred on November 19, 2023, when they took over a cargo ship called the *Galaxy Leader*, which records suggest is owned by an Israeli businessman.

Houthi targeting of commercial ships prompted multiple shipping companies to suspend operations in the Red Sea, instead embarking on a longer and costlier journey around the African continent. In response, the US and the UK, Israel's closest allies, have carried out several air strikes in Houthi-controlled regions of Yemen to debilitate its ability to target Israel backed vessels in the Red Sea. The Houthis are persistent in their attacks<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> 'Missile Attack by Yemen's Houthi Rebels Damages a Ship in the Red Sea', AP News, 29 April 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/yemen-houthi-red-sea-ship-attacks-israel-hamas-gaza-cf858f30b4ba19731f6dc7719e9fa892>.

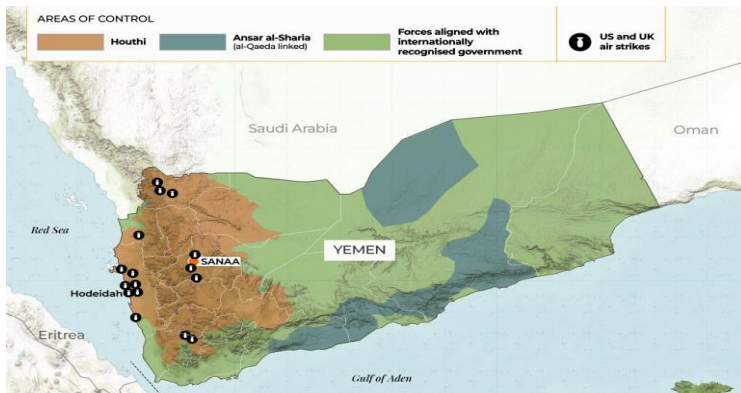


Figure 6: US and UK's Strikes on Yemen

## Iraq's Entanglement

Since the 7<sup>th</sup> of October, Iraq has become a battleground for a proxy conflict between the US and Israel on one side, and groups backed by Iran on the other. The region has witnessed a surge in tensions as these factions engage in retaliatory actions, embroiling Iraq in their geopolitical struggle.

The Iran-backed militant groups termed by the West as “the Islamic Resistance” in Iraq, have reportedly launched over 160 attacks on the US bases in Iraq and Syria, since the 7 October incident. These actions are seen as retaliation for US support of Israel during the Gaza conflict. The network responsible for most of these attacks is the Islamic Resistance in Iraq (Al-Muqawama al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq), a coalition of militia groups supported by Iran and linked to the IRGC. In response, the US has intensified its



campaign against these groups, targeting them heavily. The most notable example was of the US hitting more than 80 targets in Syria and Iraq in response to the killing of three US soldiers at a remote US base in Jordan, near the Syrian border<sup>24</sup>.

### **Role of Syria**

The Israeli onslaught in Gaza has triggered Iran-backed groups in Syria. However, although Hezbollah and Iran have been engaged since October 7, the Syrian regime's backing has been more muted. Despite its limited role, Syria continues to play an essential role in the so-called 'Axis of Resistance' because of its geostrategic position. Syria not only serves as a channel for the flow of weaponry to Hezbollah, but it also provides Iran with a foothold in the Arab-Israeli arena, allowing it to set up a second front against Israel and a platform from which to strike US installations in the area<sup>25</sup>.

Just like Iraq, Syria has also transformed into a theatre for proxy warfare since the onset of the conflict in Gaza. It has become a battleground where attacks and retaliations occur between Israel and the

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<sup>24</sup> 'Ripple Effect: How Israel's War in Gaza Sent Shockwaves to Iraq', *Aspenia Online*, 27 April 2024, <https://aspensiaonline.it/ripple-effect-how-israels-war-in-gaza-sent-shockwaves-to-iraq/>.

<sup>25</sup> 'Is Syria's al-Assad Supporting Hamas for Political Gain or Optics?', *Al Jazeera*, accessed 12 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/10/syrias-al-assad-and-supporting-hamas-all-for-political-gain-or-optics>.

US on the one hand, and Iran and Iran-backed militias on the other.

## ISRAEL-IRAN STRIKES

The conflict between Israel and Iran has historically been characterised by indirect engagement, with both nations often operating through proxies or engaging in covert actions.

However, in retaliation to an Israeli airstrike on its Damascus embassy compound on 1 April that claimed the lives of elite military officers, Iran launched more than 300 drones and cruise and ballistic missiles at Israel on 13 April, marking the nation's first direct attack on Israel<sup>26</sup>.



Figure 6A: Iranian Missiles

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<sup>26</sup> 'Iran Launches Hundreds of Missiles, Drones in First Direct Attack on Israel | Conflict News | Al Jazeera', accessed 12 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/13/israeli-army-says-iran-has-launched-drones-at-israel>.



Figure 7: Iranian Attack on Israel

The recent Israel-Iran conflict did not occur in a vacuum but was rather the culmination of a series of escalating events, starting from the 7th of October with an attack on Israel by Hamas which the former attributed to Iran's backing and operational support. Subsequent events, such as Iran's repeated warnings against Israel's indiscriminate actions in Gaza, cyber-attacks against Iran attributed to Israel, military strikes targeting Iranian interests in Syria, and an attack on the Iranian Embassy by the Israeli fighter jets ignited the situation.



Figure 8: Iranian Supreme Leader Seyyed Ali Hosseini Khamenei

Despite dangerous escalation, Iran demonstrated a calculated approach, showing reluctance to prolong direct clashes with Israel leading to an all-out war. CNN reported that “Iran’s attack seemed planned to minimise casualties while maximising spectacle.” Iran’s primary goal appears to be establishing a deterrence against aggression while avoiding an all-out war with Israel and thus shifting the focus away from the conflict in Gaza. The global and regional powers stressed restraint and caution. However, the situation remains dangerous with a strong potential for escalation.

## **MILITARY TECHNOLOGY: EXCELLENT BUT NOT DECISIVE**

Old and new military technologies have been integrated, showcasing Israel's prowess. The Eitan armoured fighting vehicle, originally meant for combat units, was deployed a year earlier without any glitches. Innovative additions such as the Iron Sting smart mortar and affordable quad-copter drones proved effective in urban warfare, minimising losses.



Figure 9: IDF

Widely adopted tools like body cameras and gun cams are now standard across Israeli teams, while camera-equipped dogs enhance reconnaissance ability in potentially booby-trapped buildings.

Israel's achievement in maintaining secure, real-time encrypted combat data link communications has thwarted any compromise by Hamas.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the Iron Dome anti-missile system remains a reliable defence mechanism.

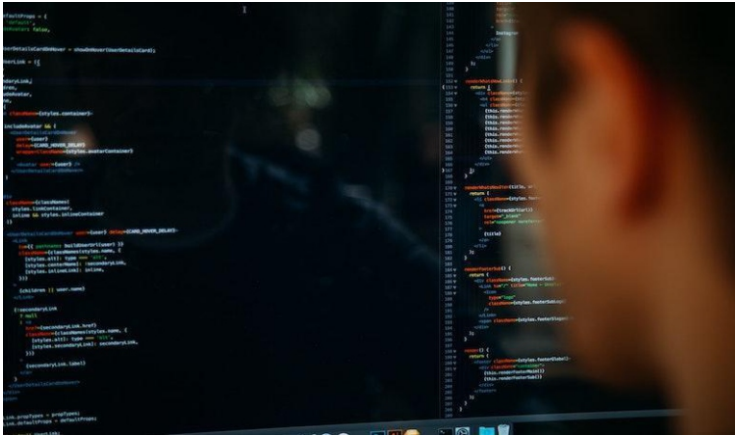


Figure 10: Computer Programme

The IDF has also started using AI in its war against Hamas. The Israeli publication +972 Magazine and Hebrew-language media outlet Local Call reported recently that the Israeli army was isolating and identifying thousands of low-ranked

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<sup>27</sup> 'Analysis: Is the Israeli Army as Militarily Successful as It Claims? | Israel War on Gaza News | Al Jazeera', accessed 13 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/1/analysis-is-the-israeli-army-as-militarily-successful-as-it-claims>.

Hamas members as potential bombing targets using an AI-assisted targeting system called Lavender<sup>28</sup>.

This Lavender AI has little to no human oversight even though 10 percent of those marked as Hamas fighters had no connection to it whatsoever. The report also alleged that Israelis used dumb bombs to target these low-level militants to save the costs of targeted munitions and deliver heavy civilian casualties by design.

Just a few weapons have had issues, such as the much-touted Trophy armoured vehicle active protection system, which proved to be of mixed or no value in close-quarter combat. Initial overreliance on it cost the Israeli army some casualties in the first phases of the war.

But the Israeli army's learning curve has been steep and, like in the case of the Merkava tank's lack of protection from above, remedial action has been applied quickly and successfully. Despite the Israeli military's operational successes, none of its technology proved to be a real game changer.

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<sup>28</sup> Amjad Iraqi, "'Lavender': The AI Machine Directing Israel's Bombing Spree in Gaza', +972 Magazine, 3 April 2024, <https://www.972mag.com/lavender-ai-israeli-army-gaza/>.

## HUMANITARIAN DIMENSION

The conflict between Israel and Hamas represents a tragic disregard for human life and blatant violations of international law. According to the Gaza Health Ministry, since the beginning of the Israeli military offensive on 7 October, more than 34,596. Palestinians have lost their lives and 77,704 were wounded<sup>29</sup>. The scale of destruction is also immense, with an estimated 62 percent of all homes in Gaza, damaged and destroyed. Additionally, over 75 percent of Gaza's population has been displaced, exacerbating the already dire situation. This crisis has been further compounded by widespread food insecurity, lack of access to clean drinking water, ineffective sanitation services, and upcoming heat waves.

### Gaza: On the Verge of Famine

The Israeli military operation in Gaza started with enforcing a complete siege, allowing “no electricity, no food, no fuel” to enter the Gaza Strip<sup>30</sup>. While

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<sup>29</sup> Usaid Siddiqui, “In Numbers: 200 Days of Israel's War on Gaza,” *Al Jazeera*, April 23, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/23/by-the-numbers-200-days-of-israels-war-on-gaza#:~:text=34%2C000%20killed,Government%20Media%20Office%20on%20Tuesday>.

<sup>30</sup> Siladitya Ray, “‘No Electricity, No Food, No Fuel’: Israel Orders ‘Complete Siege’ on Gaza Strip,” *Forbes*, October 9, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/siladityaray/2023/10/09/no-electricity->



widespread food insecurity was already prevalent in Palestine, the recent escalation in hunger has been unprecedented in this century<sup>31</sup>. Within six months of the conflict, food insecurity in Gaza escalated to Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, IPC level 5 which indicates famine for the people of Gaza<sup>32</sup>. According to the WHO, 90 percent of children under the age of 2, and 95 percent of pregnant and breastfeeding women face severe food poverty<sup>33</sup>.

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[no-food-no-fuel-israel-orders-complete-siege-on-gaza-strip/?sh=43c417b360c8](https://www.csis.org/analysis/famine-gaza#:~:text=The%20crisis%20in%20Gaza%20is,5%20(Catastrophe%2FFamine).).

<sup>31</sup> Caitlin Welsh, Anita Kirschenbaum, and Zane Swanson, "Famine in Gaza," *Centre for Strategic & International Studies*, April 12, 2024, [https://www.csis.org/analysis/famine-gaza#:~:text=The%20crisis%20in%20Gaza%20is,5%20\(Catastrophe%2FFamine\)](https://www.csis.org/analysis/famine-gaza#:~:text=The%20crisis%20in%20Gaza%20is,5%20(Catastrophe%2FFamine).).

<sup>32</sup> Caitlin Welsh, Anita Kirschenbaum, and Zane Swanson, "Famine in Gaza," *Centre for Strategic & International Studies*, April 12, 2024, [https://www.csis.org/analysis/famine-gaza#:~:text=The%20crisis%20in%20Gaza%20is,5%20\(Catastrophe%2FFamine\)](https://www.csis.org/analysis/famine-gaza#:~:text=The%20crisis%20in%20Gaza%20is,5%20(Catastrophe%2FFamine).).

<sup>33</sup> World Health Organization: WHO, "Children's Lives Threatened by Rising Malnutrition in the Gaza Strip," *World Health Organisation*, February 19, 2024, <https://www.who.int/news/item/19-02-2024-children-s-lives-threatened-by-rising-malnutrition-in-the-gaza-strip>.



Figure 11: Food Scarcity in Gaza

Despite these alarming statistics, only four bakeries in northern Gaza had reopened by the end of April with support from the World Food Programme, a gesture described by the United Nations Reliefs and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) as insufficient to address the crisis. Though the Israeli attack on World Central Kitchen intensified international pressure on Israel, the escalating famine situation presents a deaf call on the catastrophe.

### **IDPs and Refugee Crisis**

According to the UN Women, more than 1.9 million people - representing over 85 percent of Gaza's population have been displaced, including 1 million women and girls<sup>34</sup>. A significant number of displaced

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<sup>34</sup> "Gender Alert: The Gendered Impact of the Crisis in Gaza," UN Women – Headquarters, April 16, 2024,

individuals have sought refuge in Rafah, near the Egyptian border, where the looming threat of an Israeli assault heightened concerns of worsening humanitarian crisis. The conflict has inflicted extensive damage on Gaza's infrastructure, with approximately 290,820 housing units damaged or destroyed <sup>35</sup>. Following is the chart representing damages in Gaza in monetary terms.

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[https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/01/gender-alert-the-gendered-impact-of-the-crisis-in-gaza?qad\\_source=1&qclid=CjwKCAjw88yxBhBWEiwA7cm6pY2HK\\_9SCMbY9rkdv0suUgLbF470hqPI8vuRY-vbqiMAiOeT1aUmVxoCcaoQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/01/gender-alert-the-gendered-impact-of-the-crisis-in-gaza?qad_source=1&qclid=CjwKCAjw88yxBhBWEiwA7cm6pY2HK_9SCMbY9rkdv0suUgLbF470hqPI8vuRY-vbqiMAiOeT1aUmVxoCcaoQAvD_BwE).

<sup>35</sup> World Bank, "GAZA STRIP INTERIM DAMAGE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY NOTE MARCH 29, 2024," *World Bank*, 2024, <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/14e309cd34e04e40b90eb19afa7b5d15-0280012024/original/Gaza-Interim-Damage-Assessment-032924-Final.pdf>.

Sector	US\$	
Housing	\$	13,298,711,000
Commerce, Industry, and Services	\$	1,655,486,000
Agriculture	\$	628,780,000
Health	\$	553,666,000
WASH	\$	502,711,000
Environment	\$	411,300,000
Transport	\$	357,972,000
Education	\$	341,240,000
Cultural Heritage	\$	319,397,000
Energy	\$	278,522,000
ICT	\$	90,225,000
Municipal Services	\$	19,647,000
Finance	\$	8,174,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>18,465,831,000</b>

Source: World Bank<sup>36</sup>

The damage done by Israel is huge and according to Pehr Lodhammar, senior officer at the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the war had left an estimated 37 million tons of debris in the densely populated territory and could take fourteen years to clear the debris<sup>37</sup>. This damage has augmented the displacement crisis, leaving thousands without shelter or basic necessities for an uncertain duration that will loom on for generations.

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<sup>36</sup> World Bank, "GAZA STRIP INTERIM DAMAGE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY NOTE MARCH 29, 2024," *World Bank*, 2024, <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/14e309cd34e04e40b90eb19afa7b5d15-0280012024/original/Gaza-Interim-Damage-Assessment-032924-Final.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> "UN official says it could take 14 years to clear debris in Gaza," REUTERS, April 26, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/un-official-says-it-could-take-14-years-clear-debris-gaza-2024-04-26/>.

### A Glimpse of Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza

Entity	Damage	Remarks
Causalities	34,596	1 out of 70 people in Gaza have been killed by Israeli Forces
Injured	75, 815	1 out of 30 people in Gaza is injured
Food Insecurity	245 calories a day	12 percent of caloric need
Internally Disputed People	1.9 million	80 percent of Gaza's population
Homes	290,820 housing units destroyed	62 percent of all homes have been destroyed
Schools	625000 students have no access to education	8 out of every 10 schools destroyed
Health	84 percent of health facilities destroyed	10 out of 36 hospitals are partially functional
Journalists	More than 100 killed	1 every other day

## GENOCIDE AND ICJ VERDICTS

Following Israel's indiscriminate murderous campaign in Gaza, South Africa took the matter to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) levelling charges of genocide against Israel.

On 26 January 2024, the ICJ issued a decision, issuing six provisional measures aimed at preventing the genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza. The verdict required Israel to stop bombardment on Gaza but did not order a complete ceasefire.

The six provisional measures ordered by ICJ were:<sup>38</sup>

- In accordance with Article 2 of the 1948 Genocide Convention, Israel is obliged to abstain from the killing of members of the Palestinian group in Gaza
- Israel must ensure its military does not carry such actions
- Israel is required to prevent and prosecute any instance of 'direct and public incitement to commit genocide' against members of the Palestinian group in Gaza
- Israel must ensure delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza

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<sup>38</sup> Areesha Lodhi, "What Has the ICJ Ordered Israel to Do on Gaza War, and What's Next?," *Al Jazeera*, January 26, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/26/what-has-the-icj-ordered-israel-to-do-on-gaza-war-and-whats-next>.

- Israel must prevent destruction of evidences of war crimes in Gaza
- Israel must submit a report adhering to these measures in one month

Despite the ICJ's ruling ordering Israel to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza and to allow humanitarian aid into the territory, there was little improvement on the ground. Instead, the situation in Gaza further deteriorated, with civilian casualties mounting and the threat of famine looming. Shortly after the ICJ order, a conference in Jerusalem attended by Israeli government parliamentarians featured calls for Israeli settlement on the Gaza Strip and the 'voluntary migration' of Palestinians<sup>39</sup>. Such Israel's disregard for the ICJ order is disappointing, as it continues to operate with impunity and has failed to adhere to the provisional measures mandated by the Court.

## **PARALYSIS OF UNSC**

Since 1945, a myriad of resolutions have been presented in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) aimed to establish a framework for peace in the protracted Israel-Palestine conflict. They

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<sup>39</sup> Bethan McKernan, "Israeli Ministers Attend Conference Calling for 'Voluntary Migration' of Palestinians," *The Guardian*, January 30, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/29/israeli-ministers-attend-conference-calling-for-voluntary-migration-of-palestinians>.

encompassed various objectives, including urging Israel to comply with international law, advocating for Palestinian self-determination and statehood, and condemning Israel for actions such as the displacement of Palestinians and the construction of settlements in occupied territories. However, a total of 36 draft resolutions have been vetoed by one of the five permanent members. Among these, 34 were vetoed by the US, while Russia and China vetoed two resolutions<sup>40</sup>.

After the Hamas attack on 7<sup>th</sup> of October, the UNSC again came into action to resolve the conflict peacefully and impose a ceasefire on humanitarian grounds. However, in the past seven months, the US continued its veto policy on the Israel-Palestine conflict keeping the UNSC paralysed. Following is the chart, delineating some UNSC resolutions and US vetoes.

After months of deliberations and negotiations among permanent and non-permanent members of the UNSC, on 25 March 2024, Resolution 2728 was adopted. The resolution passed by a vote of 14-0, with the United States notably abstaining. The

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<sup>40</sup> Shakeeb Asrar, "How The US Has Used Its Veto Power at the UN in Support of Israel," *Al Jazeera*, February 20, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/26/how-the-us-has-used-its-veto-power-at-the-un-in-support-of-israel>.



resolution called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. It puts forth three demands<sup>41</sup>:

- An immediate ceasefire throughout the month of Ramadan, to be respected by all parties, leading to a lasting and sustainable ceasefire
- The immediate and unconditional release of all hostages
- Emphasised the urgent need to increase the flow of humanitarian assistance to and enhance the protection of civilians throughout the entire Gaza.

It is crucial that major international stakeholders reach an agreement on the necessity of an immediate ceasefire to pave the way for a lasting resolution to the conflict. However, it has not stopped Israel from blocking UN aid to Gaza<sup>42</sup>. Israel is continuing its atrocities in Gaza despite the stipulations of the UNSC resolution.

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<sup>41</sup> "What Does the U.N. Cease-Fire Resolution Mean for the Israel-Gaza War?," United States Institute of Peace, 2024, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/03/what-does-un-cess-fire-resolution-mean-israel-gaza-war#:~:text=The%20resolution%20makes%20three%20demands,asistance%20to%20and%20reinforce%20the.>

<sup>42</sup> "Gaza: Heatwave Brings New Misery and Disease Risk to Rafah," UN News, April 26, 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/04/1149011.>

## **INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS**

The US' approach to the conflict in Gaza reveals double standards in its policy. Despite Israel's continuing acts of genocide in Gaza, the US support for Israel has remained ironclad, notwithstanding the US rhetoric about the protection of human rights. While the US has consistently provided unwavering support to Israel, both militarily and diplomatically, it has refrained from condemning Israeli actions in Gaza despite international criticism of its genocide in Gaza confirmed by the ICJ. The US has consistently used its veto power to block resolutions critical of Israel's conduct in Gaza and has continued to provide substantial military aid to the country.

However, recent events and evolving global public sentiment have forced the US to navigate a delicate balancing act in its relationship with Israel. While maintaining overall support for Israel's right to self-defence, the Biden administration has increasingly voiced concerns over civilian casualties and humanitarian crises resulting from Israeli military operations in Gaza. The US has also voiced its opposition to the Israeli offensive in Rafah.



Figure 12: US President Joe Biden

Despite these critiques, the US continues to provide significant financial and military aid to Israel, indicating a dissonance between its rhetoric on human rights and its actions. Israel's determination to pursue its military objectives, such as the ground offensive in Rafah, despite US objections, highlights the unique nature of relations between the two countries, where the Israel lobby in the US has an outsize influence over its foreign policy which sometimes compels the US to act against its own interests in favour of Israeli objectives<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, First Edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).

At the global level, the US, with the support of its allies, is playing a 'twin containment' game; on the one hand to fully support Ukraine against Russia and on the other to contain China in its periphery. However, the Hamas-Israel conflict has entangled the US in a potential quagmire with far-reaching implications for its role and influence in the Middle East.

### **China and Russia**

China's stance on the recent Palestine-Israel conflict, as articulated by Premier Xi Jinping, underscores a firm commitment to peace, humanitarian principles, and adherence to international law. Premier Xi's call for a ceasefire and condemnation of what he termed as "collective punishment" against the people of Gaza reflects China's consistent criticism of Israel's actions since the onset of hostilities with Hamas. During the BRICS summit, President Xi emphasised the necessity of immediate cessation of hostilities, the establishment of safe humanitarian corridors, and the prevention of conflict escalation<sup>44</sup>. China's proposals, outlined in accordance with UN resolutions, advocate for comprehensive ceasefire implementation, and effective protection of civilians, ensuring humanitarian assistance, diplomatic mediation, and seeking a

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<sup>44</sup> Erin Hale, 'Pro-Palestine or a Trend? China's Stance on Israel-Hamas War Splits Opinion', Al Jazeera, accessed 4 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/24/pro-palestinian-or-following-trends-chinas-stance-on-israel-hamas-war>.

political settlement based on the two-state solution<sup>45</sup>. Notably, China urges the Security Council to actively engage in peace facilitation, support regional mediation efforts, and organise an international conference to formulate a concrete roadmap for Palestinian statehood. Central to China's position is the principle of respecting the will and independent choice of the Palestinian people, emphasising the importance of a just and lasting resolution that aligns with international consensus and upholds Palestinian sovereignty and rights.



Figure 13: Russian President Vladimir Putin

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<sup>45</sup> 'Position Paper of the People's Republic of China on Resolving the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict', accessed 4 May 2024, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202311/t20231129\\_11189405.html](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202311/t20231129_11189405.html).

Similar to China, Russia emphasises the need for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza to halt the collective punishment of Palestinians and to initiate substantive discussions towards a just political settlement. Both countries advocate the need for the protection of civilians, the provision of humanitarian assistance, and diplomatic mediation to de-escalate the conflict. Moreover, Russia, like China, has been critical of the US for vetoing a number of resolutions of the UNSC seeking, among others an immediate cessation of hostilities. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's assertion that the recent Hamas offensive did not occur in isolation but rather stems from decades of unfulfilled promises and a longstanding blockade highlights the Russian stance regarding Israel-Hamas war <sup>46</sup> . Furthermore, Russia's Permanent Representative to the UN, Vassily Nebenzia, criticised the US for not reflecting the collective stance of the Security Council, suggesting a growing disillusionment with Western dominance in global affairs. This criticism of Western hypocrisy extends beyond the Palestinian issue, as Lavrov has previously pointed out the disparity in Western reactions to conflicts such as the Ukraine war compared to the situation in Palestine, highlighting

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<sup>46</sup> John T. Psaropoulos, 'Russian Diplomacy Leverages Gaza Conflict for Moral High Ground', Al Jazeera, accessed 4 May 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/20/russian-diplomacy-leverages-israel-hamas-war-for-moral-high-ground>.

inconsistencies in the West's approach to international conflicts<sup>47</sup>

## **Islamic World**

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, decried "double standards" in the global response to the conflict, emphasising Israel's impunity for violations of international law. Similarly, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed disappointment in Western countries' silence regarding the ongoing violence in Palestine, highlighting a perceived lack of action on human rights and freedoms<sup>48</sup>.

Furthermore, the Arab-Islamic Summit, convened in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, reaffirmed unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people amidst the ongoing Israeli aggression. Led by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Secretary-General, H.E. Mr Hissein Brahim Taha, the Summit emphasised the

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<sup>47</sup> 'Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Remarks and Answers to Questions at the Special Session of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, Antalya, March 1, 2024 - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation', accessed 4 May 2024, [https://mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/brics/1936226/](https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/brics/1936226/).

<sup>48</sup> Edibe Beyza Caglar, 'Arab, Muslim Leaders Condemn Israel's War Crimes but Disagree on Response', Arab, Muslim Leaders condemn Israel's war crimes but disagree on response, accessed 4 May 2024, <https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/arab-muslim-leaders-condemn-israels-war-crimes-but-disagree-on-response-15785658>.

urgent need for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the establishment of humanitarian corridors to ensure the delivery of aid to Gaza, and the provision of international protection for Palestinians. Central to their stance is the unequivocal rejection of any plans for the forced displacement of Palestinians, advocating instead for a just, lasting, and comprehensive solution based on the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative<sup>49</sup>.

However, despite widespread condemnation and expressions of solidarity, there remains a sentiment that the Islamic world's response has been inadequate in terms of concrete economic and political measures against Israel. While statements condemning Israeli actions have been issued, few punitive steps against Israel have been taken. The reluctance to approve retaliatory economic and political measures against Israel, as observed during the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit,

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<sup>49</sup> Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 'At the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit in Riyadh: Secretary-General Stresses the OIC's Rejection of Forced Displacement Plans and Demands Immediate Cessation of the Israeli Aggression Against the Palestinian People', *At the Joint Arab-Islamic Extraordinary Summit in Riyadh: Secretary-General Stresses the OIC's Rejection of Forced Displacement Plans and Demands Immediate Cessation of the Israeli Aggression Against the Palestinian People*, 11 November 2023, [https://www.oic-oci.org/topic/ampg.asp?t\\_id=39915&t\\_ref=26753&lan=en](https://www.oic-oci.org/topic/ampg.asp?t_id=39915&t_ref=26753&lan=en).



highlights a gap between rhetoric and action. Despite calls for decisive action, divisions within the Islamic world and concerns about repercussions have hindered the adoption of meaningful measures.

### **Pakistan's Position**

Pakistan's stance on the Palestinian issue, as articulated by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, is characterised by a deep concern for the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the escalation of conflict in the region. Emphasising the urgent need for a ceasefire and the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid to Palestinians, Senator Dar reiterated Pakistan's principled position for the complete withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, and the establishment of an independent homeland for Palestinians along the pre-June 1967 borders with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital in a meeting with the secretary general of OIC on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May.<sup>50</sup> This stance highlights Pakistan's commitment to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to have their own homeland.

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<sup>50</sup> 'Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar's Meeting with the Secretary General of OIC', accessed 4 May 2024, <https://mofa.gov.pk/press-releases/deputy-prime-minister-and-foreign-minister-mohammad-ishaq-dars-meeting-with-the-secretary-general-of-oic>.



Figure 14: Ambassador Munir Akram

The Foreign Minister actively participated in the preparatory meeting of Foreign Ministers to the Islamic Summit of the OIC. Pakistan stressed the immediate implementation of various measures, including an end to the indiscriminate use of force and siege of Gaza, the return of displaced Palestinians to their homeland, and accountability for war crimes committed by Israel. Pakistan also advocated for the resumption of an inclusive peace process and the reactivation of the OIC's Ministerial Committee on Israeli aggression against Palestinians,

showcasing its dedication to diplomatic initiatives for resolving the crisis<sup>51</sup>.

At the UN, Ambassador Munir Akram, voicing Pakistan's sentiments, emphasised the significance of admitting Palestine as a full member of the United Nations. He highlighted this as a crucial step towards rectifying the historic injustice against the Palestinian people and achieving a two-state solution<sup>52</sup>.

Additionally, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reiterated Pakistan's commitment to peace in Gaza at a recent annual meeting of World Economic Forum, affirming that global peace hinges on the attainment of permanent peace in the region<sup>53</sup>.

Collectively, these statements reflect Pakistan's unwavering support for the Palestinian cause, advocating for justice, humanitarian aid, and diplomatic efforts to address the ongoing crisis and pave the way towards a sustainable resolution

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<sup>51</sup> 'Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's Participation in the Meeting of Foreign Ministers Preparatory to the 15th Islamic Summit of the OIC', accessed 4 May 2024, <https://mofa.gov.pk/press-releases/deputy-prime-minister-and-foreign-ministers-participation-in-the-preparatory-meeting-of-foreign-ministers-preparatory-to-the-15th-islamic-summit-of-the-oic>.

<sup>52</sup> 'Pakistan Urges Security Council to Reconsider Palestine's UN Membership Bid after US Veto | Arab News PK', accessed 4 May 2024, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2503071/pakistan>.

<sup>53</sup> 'No Peace in World without Permanent Ceasefire in Gaza', Mehr News Agency (Mehr News Agency, 30 April 2024), <https://en.mehrnews.com/news/214546/No-peace-in-world-without-permanent-ceasefire-in-Gaza>.

leading to the establishment of an independent homeland for Palestinians along the pre-June 1967 borders with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

## **ASSESSMENT**

### **Israeli Myth of Invincibility Shattered**

For nearly seven months in war with Israel, Hamas, helped by other non-state actors supporting the Palestinians, has shattered Israel's myth of invincibility. In April, Israel's intelligence chief resigned admitting failure to prevent Hamas' surprise and deadly attacks of October 7.

### **Gravest Crisis for Israel**

Unable to overcome Hamas despite its murderous tactics, Israel is embroiled in the gravest crisis since its creation as an independent state in 1948. Israel is under great international pressure and scrutiny as well as growing domestic protests.

### **Iran's Challenge**

Israel's military might was also challenged and dented by Iran on 13<sup>th</sup> of April when it fired a strong barrage of drones, cruise and ballistic missiles, some of which reached their targets in Israel penetrating Israeli defences. The US, the UK, and Jordan intercepted many of the projectiles.

Israel and Iran have tested each other's offensive and defensive capabilities. Iran seems to have

established its deterrence. Israel and the US and their allies could not afford to attack Iranian nuclear sites. Their reluctance to do so could be because of the fear of Iran possessing an atomic device and reliable delivery system, danger of conflict spiralling out of control, and losing image with Western allies, in the region and across the world.

### **Israel's Policy to Exterminate Hamas**

Israel does not want an independent Palestine next to it. It wants to eliminate Hamas. The IDF has been engaged in mass massacres of civilian Palestinians in Gaza, more than 34,596 Palestinians have died in seven apocalyptic months.

### **Israel Guilty of Genocide**

The ICJ has indicted Israel for perpetrating genocide of the Palestinians. Israel is guilty of committing crimes against humanity. The charge against Israel was spearheaded by South Africa which was later joined by several other countries. Pakistan also made a hard-hitting statement at the ICJ at The Hague.

### **Losing the Battle of Hearts and Minds**

The eruption of student protests in American university campuses against the US-backed Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza has turned the tide of public opinion.

A violent clampdown on peaceful students at Columbia University has triggered a wave of uprisings across the country, magnifying the extent to which young Americans oppose the Biden administration's unconditional support for Zionist pogroms. These protests have spread to the streets in Western countries as well as elsewhere in the world, creating a Vietnam moment for the US and its ally Israel.

### **Israel's Failure to Shift Global Attention**

Israel's provocations and targeting of the Iranian Consulate in Syria were an effort to divert attention from Gaza and to drag the US into the war. That happened only for a short while. Global attention has shifted back to the situation in Gaza, in particular Rafah. Iran's strike helped Israel win Western backing and \$26 billion in assistance from the US.

### **US Opposed to a Wider War**

The US has made it clear to Israel that it is opposed to a wider war, though its support for Israel remains ironclad.

### **US Seeking a Demilitarised Palestine**

Except on one occasion, the US has been exercising its veto in the UNSC to buy more time for Israel to break the back of Hamas fighters.

However, the Biden Administration seems open to the idea of a 'Demilitarised Palestinian State'.

### **Impasse on a Ceasefire**

Despite the UNSC resolution 2829 that called for an immediate ceasefire, no success has been achieved by the end of April 2024. The regional countries including Qatar and Egypt have been making efforts, but an agreement is still elusive.

### **Paralysis of the UNSC**

Because of deep divisions within its veto-wielding permanent members, the UNSC has been ineffective in stopping the Israeli genocide and implementing a ceasefire.

Meanwhile, more recently, the UNSC met in an emergency session on 14 April, to discuss the situation Iran-Israel situation. The usual divisions were evident, which meant no Council statement was issued. The UNSC also failed to approve membership of Palestine to the UN because of a US veto, while the UK and Switzerland abstained.

### **New Sanctions on Iran**

After Iran's direct strike on Israel, the US imposed new sanctions on Iran. The EU vowed to follow. At present Iran is isolated vis a vis the Western World.



## **Danger of Escalation**

The risk of miscalculation remains high in a fraught and volatile environment. Parties to the conflict can misread each other's intentions and the situation can spiral out of control. Speaking at the Security Council, the UN Secretary-General stated: "One miscalculation, one miscommunication, one mistake, could lead to the unthinkable — a full-scale regional conflict that would be devastating for all involved — and for the rest of the world." That danger will not recede so long as the war in Gaza continues.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Principled Policy Reflective of Popular Sentiment**

Pakistan may continue to follow its principled position on the issue, reflecting the popular sentiments of the people of Pakistan on the plight and inherent rights of the Palestinian people; their deep sympathy and support for the oppressed people of Palestine, and their strong condemnation of Israel for its illegal occupation of the Palestinian lands and committing the crime of genocide against the Palestinian population of Gaza.

### **Assume Leadership Role**

At the UN, the OIC and other international forums, Pakistan may play its leadership role in seeking a lasting ceasefire, return of prisoners and immediate and sustained delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza.

Simultaneously, Pakistan may spearhead efforts for the resumption of a diplomatic and political process for the early realisation of the internationally agreed two-state solution and the creation of a secure, viable, contiguous, and sovereign state of Palestine based on the pre-June 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

## **Raising Voice to Bring Israel to Account**

With like-minded countries, Pakistan may call for bringing Israel to account for carrying out genocide of the Palestinian people and committing heinous crimes against humanity.

Pakistan along with other Islamic and like-minded countries, may continue to highlight gross violations of international humanitarian law by Israel and its supporters.

## **Humanitarian Assistance**

Pakistan may continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people in Gaza.

## **Draw Parallels between Palestine and Kashmir**

There are many parallels and similarities in the ongoing grave situation in Palestine and IIOJK. While forcefully condemning Israeli actions in Gaza and the Indian atrocities in IIOJK, Pakistan should continue to seek just and equitable solutions to the Palestinian issue as well as other long-standing and unresolved disputes especially the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, based on UNSC resolutions and the international legality.

## **Freedom Struggle, not Terrorism**

Pakistan may continue to highlight that under international law, the struggle of people subjugated to foreign occupation, for self-determination and national liberation is legitimate and cannot be equated with terrorism.

## **Highlight atrocities in Palestine and Kashmir.**

Print, electronic, and social media tools may be used to highlight the plight of the Palestinian and Kashmiri people and to garner support for their causes. Moreover, extensive efforts should be made to mobilise human rights organisations to highlight the Israeli and Indian atrocities and inhumane treatment of innocent Palestinians and Kashmiri people respectively, to put greater international pressure on Israel and India.

## **Strengthen bonds with Islamic Countries.**

The present crisis in the Middle East provides a good opportunity for Pakistan to strengthen and diversify its close, friendly and fraternal ties with the OIC countries, making economic cooperation and investments a primary focus of cooperation.

## **The democratisation of the UNSC**

Pakistan may highlight the paralysis of the UNSC and its failure to maintain international peace and security.

Pakistan may underline the need to democratise the UNSC and make it more effective and accountable. Pakistan may continue to strongly oppose the induction of any new permanent members, with or without the veto power, thus avoiding the creation of new centres of privilege.

### **National Power and Economic Strength**

The ongoing plight of the Palestinians in Gaza has important lessons for Pakistan. In the contemporary world, national power in terms of economic and technological strength, political stability and military might play a decisive role in determining the outcome of major issues of war and peace.

### **Keep a close watch on India.**

Pakistan should remain vigilant about any misadventure or false flag operation by India while the world is preoccupied with the Palestine-Israel conflict.

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*"Israel must immediately halt its military offensive, and any other action in the Rafah Governorate, which may inflict on the Palestinian group in Gaza conditions of life that could bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part."*

*– Nawaf Salam, ICJ President*

*"Palestine should be returned to them (Palestinians)."*

*– Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei, Iranian Supreme Leader*

*"I reiterate my appeal for both parties (Israel and Hamas) to show the political courage and spare no effort to secure an agreement now."*

*– António Guterres, United Nations Secretary General*

*"The strongest response to Israel and the path to victory lie in unity and integrity."*

*– Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkish President*

