EXPERT'S REPORT

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

CHURKIN MOSCOW INTERNATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

ENSURING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STABILITY AND ACCESS TO HUMANITARIAN AID FOR THE POPULATION OF THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES AND THE GOLAN HEIGHTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The humanitarian situation in the Palestinian Territories and the Golan Heights remains one of the most urgent ongoing crises requiring international attention. As of 2026, Gaza is in a state of recognized famine, while humanitarian efforts are heavily underfunded. Meanwhile, the December 2024 collapse of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement has exacerbated instability in the Golan Heights.

The issue of Palestine and the Golan is a notorious example of modern conflicts, where political interests affect the lives of the civilians in a very brutal way. The underlying causes that led to this state of affairs are so entangled that the problems seem unresolvable. The stakes of great and middle powers, century-old mutual enmity, and ongoing violence hinder humanitarian efforts to meet the basic needs of civilians. The task of reversing this negative trend is, undoubtedly, a courageous one.

This report is intended to provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of the situation currently unfolding in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip) and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. While the report covers events from 1948 to 2026, the primary aim is to cover the modern time, starting from the 2023 Gaza war. Aside from addressing the background of this issue, the report will provide extensive and up-to-date situation overview, and outline the positions of relevant parties. The main focus of the present report is economic, social, and humanitarian dimensions of the situation, which correspond with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)'s mandate. The other questions, such as political organization and security, will also be addressed in the report, as they have a direct connection to humanitarian conditions. Correspondingly, delegates in the present committee are tasked with drafting resolutions within these economic, social, and humanitarian dimensions. Delegates should also refrain from focusing on questions of political status, sovereignty, or security, which are subjects of other committees.

As to ECOSOC's goals regarding this issue, delegates are expected to create a concrete, actionable mechanism for securing and sustaining humanitarian access at key points across both Palestine and the Golan Heights, as well as for closing the humanitarian funding gap. Beyond these central problems, further issues to be addressed resource allocation disparities and to support reconstruction and infrastructure financing.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1 Profile of concerned regions

Palestinian Territories. The Palestinian territories of the State of Palestine, a partially recognised country located in the Southern Levant region in West Asia, include the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. These areas represent only part of the former British Mandate of Palestine, which was partitioned between Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. The territories are divided both physically and politically, and ultimately constitute the core of the long-lasting Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The economy of the Palestinian territories is fragmented and is subject to Israeli restrictions. The overall GDP of the State of Palestine has declined due to the ongoing war and blockade of Gaza and continues to suffer from the collapse of several economic sectors. The vast majority of the population, especially in Gaza, and the economy overall depend on international aid from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and remittances from Palestinians overseas. Gaza in particular faces severe humanitarian challenges.

Golan Heights. The Golan Heights is the territory at the southwest corner of Syria, the majority of which has also been occupied and administered by Israel as a result of the 1967 Six-Day War, and was eventually, effectively, annexed in 1981. The territory serves Israel as a strategic buffer zone against military threats from Syria to the north. Furthermore, the Golan Heights is seen as a strategic region that provides about ⅓ of Israel's fresh water supply.

Most of the Syrian Arab inhabitants had left the area during the 1967 conflict. Today, the population of the region is roughly divided between the remaining Syrian Arabs (primarily Druze) and Israeli settlers who moved there since the end of the Six-Day War. Most of the Syrian residents face challenges on the ground in not associating themselves with the Israelis, especially in regards to the building and expansion of their overcrowded settlements[1].

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[1] United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General, A/78/529 (2023), para. 13, available at: https://docs.un.org/en/A/78/529

2.2 History of the recognitions of concerned territories

The territories of the State of Palestine, as well as the Golan Heights, are considered to be occupied by the State of Israel under international humanitarian law. All competent legal authorities, including the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), recognise the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Golan Heights as occupied territories. Furthermore, 157 members of the United Nations recognise the independence of the State of Palestine.

The international community and the UN refer to the area of Palestine as the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). The UNSC Resolution 242 (1967) passed after the Six-Day War established the principle of the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war" and called for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the occupied territories. Moreover, the United Nations (UN) and the ICJ continue to conclude that the Israeli presence in the OPT is unlawful, and demand that it be brought to an end immediately. Indeed, the ICJ issued a landmark advisory opinion concluding that fundamental principles of international law have been violated, including the Palestinian right to self-determination[2].

Concerning the Golan Heights, the area is internationally recognised as sovereign Syrian territory that has been occupied by Israel since 1967. UNSC Resolution 497 (1981) adopted in response to Israel's Golan Heights Law, declares that "the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights is null and void and without international legal effect"[3]. The General Assembly likewise continues to pass resolutions reaffirming the illegality of the 1981 annexation. The overwhelming majority of states, excluding the United States of America and Colombia[4], continue to regard the Golan Heights as sovereign Syrian territory.

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[2] International Court of Justice (ICJ), Summary of the Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024, available at: https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-sum-01-00-en.pdf

[3] United Nations, Security Council, Resolution 497 (1981), available at: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/26751?v=pdf

[4] Al Jazeera, "Colombia's far-right government recognises Israeli claim over Golan Heights" available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/8/11/colombias-far-right-government-recognises-israeli-claim-over-golan-heights

2.3 Dynamics of regional stability and the evolution of international responses

The deterioration of stability in the concerned territories occurred gradually, especially accelerating during the Palestinian uprisings, culminating in the 2023 Gaza war, and further intensified by rising tensions between Syria and Iran from 2025.

The genesis of instability in the region in modern times can be traced to the “Nakba” (Arabic for “the Catastrophe”), the term used by the Palestinians to characterise the displacement and expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, causing a lasting refugee crisis. That, in turn, gave rise to the IV Geneva Convention, which established humanitarian protections for civilians during war and military occupation, and the creation of UNRWA by UN General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV), tasked with carrying out “[...] direct relief and works programmes” for Palestine refugees[5]. The Gaza Strip was under control of Egypt and the West Bank under Jordan, until the 1967 Six-Day War.

The Six-Day War led to Israel gaining control over the territories of Palestine and the Syrian Golan Heights. In response to the outbreak of the war, the UNSC unanimously adopted Resolution 242, establishing the legal principle requiring the withdrawal of military forces from newly occupied territories in exchange for regional peace[6]. Regarding humanitarian actions, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC, or Red Cross) initiated continuous monitoring of Israel’s compliance with the IV Geneva Convention[7]. Moreover, following the war, Israel requested that UNRWA continue its operations, an arrangement supported by the Comay-Michelmore Agreement[8]. The agency’s mandate has shifted from providing employment and humanitarian aid to the Palestinian population to delivering healthcare, social services and schooling[9].

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[5] UNRWA, “What is the mandate of UNRWA?” available at: https://www.unrwa.org/what-mandate-unrwa-0

[6] United Nations, Digital Library, Resolution 242 (1967) / [adopted by the Security Council at its 1382nd meeting], of 22 November 1967., available at: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/90717?ln=en&v=pdf

[7] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), “ICRC appeals: Near East”, ICRC Casebook, available at: https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/icrc-appeals-near-east

[8] UNRWA, [Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, (A/62/13)], available at: https://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/20100118134924.pdf

[9] The Guardian, “UN agency investigates staff suspected of role in 7 October attack on Israel” available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/26/unrwa-investigation-staff-7-october-attack-israel

Six years after the Six-Day War, Syria and Egypt made an attempt to regain lost territories by force, which led to the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The war ultimately resulted in the Agreement on the Disengagement of Forces between Israel and Syria, and created a demilitarised buffer zone that ensured nearly 40 years of stable inter-state containment. Under UNSC Resolution 350, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) was tasked with maintaining the ceasefire between Israel and Syria establishment by UNSC Resolution 338[10].

In December 1981, the Israeli Knesset ratified the application of Israel's government and laws to the Golan Heights, which amounted to annexation of the territory but lacked international legal effect[11]. Most Syrian Golan Druze who have stayed on the annexed territory of Golan Heights have maintained their national identity and declined Israeli citizenship, holding permanent residency status instead. Facilitated by the Red Cross, hundreds of Druze students crossed the border into Syria to seek education there. A tacit agreement between Israel and Syria allowed the Druze to export their agricultural crops to Syria.

The deterioration of stability occurred almost 20 years after the Six-Day War, in the form of the First Palestinian Intifada, the sustained uprising carried out by Palestinian civilians and militants from 1987 to 1993. The number of Palestinian casualties prompted international condemnation, as well as the emergency support from international organisations providing humanitarian aid. Despite UNSC Resolutions 607 and 608 – along with other drafted resolutions condemning Israel for disregarding Security Council resolutions and for not complying with the IV Geneva Convention, which were ultimately vetoed by the US – Israel declared that it would not abide by resolutions[12], and obstructed UN investigations. Nevertheless, the First Intifada prompted interim agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, known as the Oslo Accords, the core issue of which was the withdrawal of the Israeli military from Palestinian territories. The West Bank territory was divided into three administrative divisions: Areas A and B, under Palestinian administration, and Area C, under full Israeli control. Furthermore, Israel and the PLO signed the Paris Protocol, an amendment to the Oslo Accords which established a customs union and trade cooperation. In addition, an Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) was formed, the primary function of which is to coordinate the delivery of international aid to Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority[13].

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[10] United Nations, Digital Library, Resolution 350 (1974), available at: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/93704?ln=en&v=pdf

[11.] United Nations, Digital Library, Resolution 497 (1981), available at: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/26751?ln=es&v=pdf

[12] Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Pilgrimage for Peace (1997), p. 96, Internet Archive, available at: https://archive.org/details/pilgrimageforpea00pere/page/96

[13] Local Aid Coordination Secretariat (LACS), “Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC),” available at: https://www.lacs-mopic.ps/en/Article/526/ad-hoc-liaison-committee-ahlc

Another major uprising by Palestinians against Israel, known as the Second Intifada, erupted in September 2000 and lasted until February 2005. Despite Israel's initial commitment under the Oslo Accords to a phased withdrawal of its forces from parts of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, as well as to affirming Palestinian rights to self-government, Palestinian freedom of movement worsened[14]. During the Second Intifada, Israel built the West Bank barrier, a separation barrier along the demarcation line set out in the 1949 Armistice Agreement (The Green Line) and inside parts of the West Bank[15], as well as a rigid network of military checkpoints. In order to monitor the movement restrictions and coordinate humanitarian access, the UN established the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the occupied Palestinian territory (OCHA oPt). Eventually, in 2005 Israel executed a unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip, withdrawing its ground troops and dismantling all settlements, though it retained comprehensive external control over the territory's land, borders, airspace, and maritime access.

Two years after the Second Intifada, Israel imposed a complete blockade on the movement of goods and people in and out of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, as an attempt to isolate Hamas after its takeover, to exert political pressure and prevent weapons smuggling. During the Second Intifada, Israel had already imposed blockades on the Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip, which led to reports of child malnourishment doubling within a year[16].

The general blockade continues to the present day, and has largely impacted the wellbeing of the population: in 2022, 1.3 million out of 2.1 million Palestinians in Gaza (62%) required food assistance; 78% of piped water in Gaza was unfit for human consumption[17]. Since the beginning of the Gaza war in October 2023, Israel has declared a total blockade, blocking the entry of water, food, medicine and fuel[18].

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[14] Jeremy Pressman, "The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" Journal of Conflict Studies, available at: https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/220/378

[15]United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA oPt), "Humanitarian impact: 20 years of the Barrier (December 2022)," available at: https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-impact-20-years-barrier-december-2022

[16]Clare Dyer, "Cases of child malnutrition double in Gaza because of blockade," BMJ / PubMed Central, available at: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1172086/

[17] UNICEF, "Gaza Strip: Humanitarian Impact of 15 Years of Blockade (June 2022)," available at: https://www.unicef.org/mena/documents/gaza-strip-humanitarian-impact-15-years-blockade-june-2022

[18]BBC News, "Gaza 'soon without fuel, medicine and food' - Israel authorities," available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67051292

The blockade and the war led to a humanitarian disaster: the destruction of local infrastructure, mass displacement of the population, ongoing famine and healthcare collapse, and a lack of access for UN agencies and humanitarian aid. Illustrating the rapid scale of the disaster, UN data from October 21, 2023, reported 4,137 killed in Gaza (70% being women and children), with over 1,000 missing under rubble. Within just weeks, 1.4 million people were internally displaced and at least 30% of all housing was destroyed or damaged. Furthermore, in 2024 the Knesset passed a law that restricts the activities of UNRWA within Israel's territory.[19] As of August 2025, the whole population faced "high levels of acute food insecurity"[20]. At this period of time, conditions in Gaza "are worse than ever before"[21].

Correspondingly, the stability of the Golan Heights has deteriorated with the beginning of the Syrian civil war. As soon as Damascus lost control over the Quneitra Governorate, UNDOF was forced to temporarily evacuate from the Syrian borderland until 2018. On the other side, the Israel Defence Forces launched Operation "Good Neighbor", which provided medical and humanitarian assistance to the Syrian population from bordering settlements, but was shut down in September 2018 after Syrian government forces under Bashar al-Assad regained control of the border region. Around that time, the United States, under the administration of president Donald Trump had announced the cut of all US fundings of the UNRWA, which meant the loss of the agency's largest donor[22]. That, in turn, led to a large budget deficit and a threat to all the operations on the Palestinian and Golan Heights territories. As of September 2026, not only UNRWA but other international aid organizations are struggling financially as a result of the US's sharp cut in support[23].

The subsequent fall of the Assad regime delivered a decisive blow to the regional status quo, effectively dismantling the 1974 Disengagement Agreement. The Israeli military seized control of the buffer zone and advanced its strategic positions beyond the original separation line.

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[19] UN News, "Israeli laws blocking UNRWA – devastating humanitarian impact for Palestinians?," available at: https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/10/1156326

[20] Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), [IPC Gaza Strip Acute Food Insecurity Malnutrition July-Sept 2025 Special Snapshot], available at: https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Malnutrition_July_Sept2025_Spe

[21] The Hill, "Gaza conditions worse than ever, USAID chief says," available at: https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/4693423-usaid-samantha-power-gaza-rafah-conditions-israel-hamas-war//

[22] The Guardian, "Trump to cut all US funding for UN's main Palestinian refugee programme," available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/31/trump-to-cut-all-us-funding-for-uns-main-palestinian-refugee-programme

[23] Al Jazeera, "UN slashes food aid for occupied West Bank and Gaza amid funding shortfall," available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/9/1/un-slashes-food-aid-for-occupied-west-bank-and-gaza-amid-funding-shortfall

2.4 Key developments of Israeli settlement policies

Besides the construction of the West Bank Barrier, over the past decades Israeli authorities have significantly expanded state-sanctioned settlements and facilitated the creation of unauthorised outposts[24]. The expanding settlements, outposts, and the barrier have severely fragmented the West Bank, de facto creating many isolated Palestinian enclaves and breaking social and economic ties between Palestinian communities. Furthermore, it has restricted access to agricultural resources.

Another issue caused by the Israeli settlement policies is population displacement, resulting from area division and strict planning regimes within Area C and East Jerusalem. It is nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain building permits there; combined with the land confiscation, settler violence, and systemic house demolitions in Area C of the West Bank, this contributes to a crisis of internally displaced

persons (IDPs). Palestinians are forced to relocate to more crowded areas. In contrast, governmental plans such as the Ariel Sharon plan of 1977 were specifically designed to establish civilian Jewish communities in already heavily populated Palestinian regions. The aim of such action is to secure the territory for Israel and encircle the West Bank's palestinian population. The Golan Heights faces similar measures; for example, in April 2026, Israel approved a five-year, $334 million plan aimed at expanding settlements and infrastructure in the Golan Heights[25].

The United Nations attempted to combat the establishment of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, precisely by adopting Security Council Resolution 2334 in December 2016. The resolution condemned all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition and status of the OPT, and demanded that Israel immediately cease all settlement activities. Despite this, as the UN Secretary-General has repeatedly reported, Israel continues to ignore these demands[26].

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[24]Harvard Law Review, "U.N. Security Council Resolution 2334" (Vol. 130), available at:https://harvardlawreview.org/print/vol-130/u-n-security-council-resolution-2334/

[25]The Times of Israel, "Government approves 5-year, billion-shekel plan to develop Golan, give it its 1st city" availableat:https://www.timesofisrael.com/government-approves-5-year-billion-shekel-plan-to-develop-golan-give-it-its-1st-city/

[26] United Nations, Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) – Quarterly report of the Secretary-General 2334 (2016), para. 2, available at: https://www.un.org/unispal/document/implementation-of-security-council-resolution-2334-2016-quarterly-report-of-the-secretary-general/

3. CURRENT SITUATION OVERVIEW

NOTA BENE. As experts, we try to provide delegates with objective and unbiased information only. In this chapter of the report, however, we came across a significant obstacle to objectivity: it is the asymmetry in publicly available data. The amount of relevant data provided by the anti-Israeli side is far greater than that provided by the pro-Israeli side. This raises a dilemma: we have a large volume of data from one side and a limited volume of data from the other – if we leave it as such, our analysis would be tilted towards overrepresentation of one position; if we equalize data by sides, we would have to cut out relevant information and fall into selection bias. In the end, we decided to keep all available information while staying as neutral as possible. **Be advised of potential disbalances in the information. All sources are displayed and verified.**

3.1 De jure and de facto status of territories

Palestinian Territories. Within international law, the Palestinian Territories are generally referred to as the "Occupied Palestinian Territory", comprising the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip.[27] Israel has not formally annexed the West Bank or Gaza, but it has de facto extended its law and jurisdiction over East Jerusalem. Israel subsequently declared Jerusalem its capital in 1980 – which was not recognized by the UN.[28] Israel generally describes the West Bank and Gaza as "disputed territories" whose final status and sovereignty remain unresolved and must be settled through negotiations. In the West Bank, Israel maintains security and administrative powers, especially in Area C, while the Palestinian Authority exercises limited self-government in Areas A and B[29]. Concerning Gaza, Israel maintains that the strip is no longer occupied because it does not exercise effective control there[30].

Golan Heights. Within the UN system, the territory is exclusively called "the occupied Syrian Golan". Despite this lack of international recognition, Israel controls approximately 1,500 sq km (80%)[31] of the Golan Heights' total area of 1,860 sq km[32].

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[27] UN General Assembly and Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General: The Situation in the Middle East, A/34/584–S/13578 (24 October 1979), para. 45, available at: https://docs.un.org/en/A/34/58

[28] UN Security Council, Resolution 465 (1980), S/RES/465 (1 March 1980), preambular para. 5, available at: https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/465(1980)

[29] International Crisis Group, Sovereignty in All but Name: Israel's Quickening Annexation of the West Bank (9 October 2025), available at: https://www.crisisgroup.org/rpt/middle-east-north-africa/israelpalestine/252-sovereignty-all-name-israels-quickening-annexation-west-bank

[30] Prime Minister of Israel, PM Netanyahu's statement with President Donald Trump in the White House (29 September 2025), available at: https://embassies.gov.il/kenya/en/news/pm-netanyahu-s-statement-president-donald-trump-white-house-29-sep-2025

[31] Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and Critical Threats Project (CTP), Interactive Map: Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria (27 February 2026), available at: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1933cb1d315f4db3a4f4dcc5ef40753a

[32] United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General, A/81/111 (2026), para. 83, available at: https://docs.un.org/en/A/81/111

One part of the plateau was taken over in 1967 and the other one following Israel's incursion into the UNDOF deployment zone in 2024. The first occupied part of the plateau was officially annexed by the Knesset in 1981 under the Golan Heights Law, thereby granting Israel the right to exert its law on the territory. Since then, the joined area has undergone institutional integration with Israel, including administrative structures, services, and economy. To this day, the region remains relatively stable in terms of security and institutional stability. The same cannot be said of the occupied UNDOF deployment zone, which has transitioned to Israel's control in 2024. It has not been officially annexed by Israel, nor has it reached any degree of stability – various reports describe appearing Israeli military outposts, ongoing raids, and haphazardous local administration. Human rights organizations reported that civilians in affected areas faced curfews, restrictions on freedom of movement and access to land, damage to infrastructure, destruction of property and displacement[33]. To summarize, Israel's control over the territory occupied in 2024 remains military, whereas the previously annexed territories have already been integrated within Israel and are stable.

Israel, on the other hand, does not recognize the plateau as "occupied", since these territories are fully integrated within its state. However, the international status of mentioned territories has not yet been renegotiated after the 1967 war as required by the aforementioned UNSC Resolution 242(1967). Meanwhile, ongoing instability within the Syrian government further obstructs already complicated talks between the two states, which have a previous history of hostilities.

3.2 Demography and migration dynamics

Demography

Palestinian Territories. The West Bank of Palestine is currently inhabited by approximately 3.4 million Palestinians[34] alongside an estimated 737,332 Israeli settlers across the West Bank and East Jerusalem combined.[35] Figures may vary by source. The total current population of Gaza is extremely hard to measure due to mass casualties and migration, as well as due to functional impairment of institutions that provided such information. However, 2.1 million people is the consensus estimate.

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[33] United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Report of the Secretary-General, E/2026/77 (2026), para. 85, available at: https://docs.un.org/en/E/2026/77

[34] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), available at: https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/

[35] United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General on Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem, and in the Occupied Syrian Golan, A/80/399 (2025), para. 12, available at: https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/399

Golan Heights. The current population of the Golan Heights is estimated at 50,000-60,000 people.[36] They are divided into 3 main groups: Israeli settlers, Syrian Druze, and Alawites. According to a UN report, Israeli settlers make up roughly 31,000 people, whereas Syrian Druze and Alawites make up 22,000-24,000 people. Since 1967, more than 140,000 Syrians have been displaced, emptying 341 villages. Now, there are 35 Israeli settlements and 4 remaining villages, inhabited primarily by Druze residents. [37]

Migration and cross-border contact

Palestinian Territories. Movement outside of Gaza is severely limited. Palestinians have only one corridor for exiting the sector – Rafah, which is the only checkpoint open for civilian passage. Inside Gaza, meanwhile, approximately 90% of its population – 1.9 million people – are reported to have been forcibly displaced[39]. In the West Bank, movement is governed by an extensive Israeli checkpoint system, consisting of more than 900 obstacles[40]. East Jerusalem is separated from the West Bank by the Separation Barrier, and travel between the two areas requires permits that are difficult to obtain.

Golan Heights. UNHRC resolution 52/33 affirms displaced Golan Syrians' right to return home[41]. However, there are no records of whether such returns ever happened, nor are there records of mechanisms for their return. The Syrian Arab Republic accuses Israel of denying Syrian proposals to fully reopen the Quneitra crossing to allow the people of the Golan to exercise their rights to freedom of movement. As of now, the crossing is opened periodically and is designated for the passage of UN personnel, students, clergy, and other members of the Druze community in the Golan Heights – yet crossings remain rare and require special approval from Israeli authorities. Otherwise, there are no legal ways to travel between states, resulting in numerous attempts to cross the border without authorization from either side.

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[36]United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General, A/81/111 (2026), para. 83, available at: https://docs.un.org/en/A/81/111

[37]Ibid.

[38] OCHA, Reported impact snapshot | Gaza Strip (2 September 2026), available at: https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-2-september-2026

[39]United Nations, Secretary-General, Implementation of Economic and Social Council Resolution 2025/33 (18 June 2026), para. 20, available at: https://www.un.org/unispal/document/sg-implementation-report-2025-33-18jun26/

[40]United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Movement and Access in the West Bank (April 2026), available at: https://www.ochaopt.org/content/movement-and-access-west-bank-april-2026

[41] United Nations, Human Rights Council, Resolution 52/33, A/HRC/RES/52/33 (2023), para. 5, available at: https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AHRCRES5233.pdf

3.3 Infrastructure and access to basic services

Water access and management

Palestinian territories. In the West Bank, Palestinians face structural constraints to water access, with the governance system prioritizing Israeli settlers over the well-being of the Palestinian population[42]. In the Gaza Strip, the situation remains severe, since much of the water infrastructure was destroyed amid the conflict. It is estimated that the water supply of the Gaza Strip fell by almost 75% since October 2023, leading to a surge in cases of acute watery diarrhea and jaundice syndrome[43].

Golan Heights. Water reserves of the Golan Heights are integrated within Israel's national water infrastructure. Under the 1959 Israeli Water Law, all water resources were nationalized, thus banning unlicensed water collection, including from wells and rainwater. This created a strong pressure mechanism for Israeli authorities over the local population who might lose their access to water at the authorities' discretion.

Food security

Palestinian Territories. Gaza's food security situation was formally declared a famine by the Famine Review Committee of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification[44]. The West Bank has not reached famine-level conditions but World Food Program (WFP) reports growing food insecurity, estimating 900,000 people are food insecure[45].

Golan Heights. Access to food is considered to remain stable across most of the Golan, since there are no reports from human rights activists on the ground proving otherwise. The local population – both Israeli and Druze – has widespread access to grocery markets. Occasional food shortages may happen in the 2024 occupied territories which remain unstable amid ongoing hostilities[46] .

Healthcare

Palestinian Territories. Gaza's healthcare is confirmed to be in a severe crisis.[48] The World Health Organization reports that 94% of hospitals and health facilities have been damaged or destroyed as of mid-2025[47]. In the West Bank, access to care remains somewhat better: 86% of hospitals are fully functional. The precise numbers are the following: 39 out of 663 health service points remain fully functional in Gaza, 869 out of 891 health service points remain fully functional in the West Bank[49] .

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[42] United Nations, Secretary-General, Implementation of Economic and Social Council Resolution 2025/33 (18 June 2026), para. 41, available at: https://www.un.org/unispal/document/sg-implementation-report-2025-33-18jun26/

[43]. Ibid., para. 42

[44]. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), Famine Review Committee Report: Gaza Strip (August 2025), available at: https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Famine_Review_Committee_Report_Gaza_Aug2025.pdf

[45]. World Food Programme, State of Palestine, available at: https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/palestine-emergency

[46] United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (3 June 2025), S/2025/350, section II, available at: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4084021/files/S_2025_350-EN.pdf

[47] World Health Organization, Executive Board, 158th Session, EB158/25 (2026), para. 4, available at: https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB158/B158_25-en.pdf

[48] Ibid., para. 5

[49] Health Cluster, Unified Dashboard, available at: https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiODAxNTYzMDYtMjQ3YS00OTMzLTkxMWQtOTU1NWEwMzE5NTMwIiwidCI6ImY2MTBjMGI3LWJkMjQtNGIzOS04MTBiLTNkYzI4MGFmYjU5MCIsImMiOjh9

Golan Heights. There is no credible source of information by an independent third party about the state of healthcare in the Golan Heights. The Syrian side claims the occupation authorities exploit the healthcare situation as a means of pressure by imposing costly health insurance systems and denying residents access to adequate medical facilities. Israel claims the opposite: all inhabitants of the Golan Heights have non-discriminatory comprehensive health coverage. Both sides have an incentive to promote their own narrative and discredit their opponent's.

Housing and construction

Palestinian Territories. Destruction and demolition of houses in the OPT are independently and extensively documented. In Gaza, UN satellite assessments found approximately 83% of all structures damaged as of late-2025[50]. In the West Bank, Israeli authorities demolished Palestinian structures for lacking Israeli-issued building permits.

Golan Heights. Information about housing and construction in the Golan Heights remains limited. A member of the Golan-based advocacy NGO Al-Marsad describes a situation where Israeli authorities refuse villagers permission to build beyond fixed village boundaries, which produces visibly dense, constrained housing in contrast to low-density Israeli settlements nearby[51]. No quantified housing-deficit figures are available, nor can the statement be definitively verified.

3.4 Human rights and protection of civilians

Status of residents

Palestinian Territories. Palestinians in the OPT have no single unified legal status. In the West Bank and Gaza, most are not Israeli citizens or residents, but are subject to Israeli military law or blockade controls. East Jerusalem Palestinians hold Israeli "permanent resident" status which can be revoked.

Golan Heights. Under the 1981 Golan Heights Law, Syrian residents were offered Israeli citizenship. It was not automatically granted and those who did not apply received permanent resident status. Such non-citizens may carry Israeli-issued laissez-passer for international travel but their nationality is listed as "undefined", which throws these Golan Heights Syrians into legal limbo – they hold Syrian passports despite there being no Syrian authority in the Golan and are not considered citizens by Israel. Still, non-citizens enjoy such rights as freedom of movement and work within Israel, national insurance and health coverage, and, recently, the right to vote in local council elections.

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50. UNOSAT, Gaza Governorate Comprehensive Damage Assessment (7 October 2025), available at: https://unosat.org/products/4205

51. The National, "Divided and marginalised: How Syria's war split occupied Golan Heights," available at: https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/mena/divided-and-marginalised-how-syria-s-war-split-occupied-golan-heights-1.756863

Freedom & Equality

Palestinian territories. There are several reports of human rights violations concerning rights to freedom and non-discrimination, particularly regarding legal protection and access to economic and social benefits. For instance, Entry into Israel Law (Law No. 5712-1952) grants the Israeli Minister of Interior broad discretion to revoke the permanent residency permits of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem (arts. 2 and 5, and para. 22 of the present document)[52].

Golan Heights. The status of Syrian residents of the occupied Syrian Golan remains vulnerable due to their unequal access to land, housing and basic services. Syrian farmers face higher levels of taxes and restrictions on the use of water. While Israeli settlements receive an allotted share of 750 cubic metres of water per dunum of land, Syrian producers received 200 cubic metres, therefore making the water supply almost 4 times more than to the settlers. Water shortages usually result in the diversion of water resources to the settlements and, consequently, in some reduction of water provision to the Syrian farmers[53].

3.5 Humanitarian access and international organizations

Palestinian Territories. Humanitarian access in Gaza remains severely constrained, since the Israeli military remains deployed across more than 50% of Gaza, where access to humanitarian facilities and agricultural land is either restricted or blocked entirely[54]. However, international organizations – such as OCHA, UNRWA, WFP – continue operating in the unoccupied part of Gaza with significant funding constraints. For instance, in 2025, Member States donated approximately $1.7 billion out of the $4 billion (42%) requested to meet the most critical humanitarian needs of 3 million people identified as requiring assistance in Palestine, under the 2025 Flash Appeal for the OPT[55]. Nonetheless, international organizations together help sustain at least partial functionality of 308 medical service points in the Gaza Strip and 869 in the West Bank.

Golan Heights. The main humanitarian access in the Golan Heights is structured around the ICRC-facilitated Quneitra crossing and was previously monitored by UNDOF. However, after the 2024 Israeli incursion into the demilitarized zone, Quneitra crossing came fully under Israeli control, thus disrupting the access point[56] .

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[52] UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding observations on the combined seventeenth to nineteenth periodic reports of Israel, CERD/C/ISR/CO/17-19, para. 15, available at: https://docs.un.org/en/CERD/C/ISR/CO/17-19

[53] UN General Assembly and Economic and Social Council, Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan: Note by the Secretary-General, A/68/77–E/2013/13 (8 May 2013), para. 116, available at: https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n13/326/65/pdf/n1332665.pdf

[54] UN General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General, A/81/111 (2026), para. 50, available at: https://docs.un.org/en/A/81/111

[55]OCHA, Humanitarian Situation Update #353 | Gaza Strip (14 January 2026), section “Funding”, available at: https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-353-gaza-strip

[56] Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and Critical Threats Project (CTP), Interactive Map: Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria (27 February 2026), available at: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1933cb1d315f4db3a4f4dcc5ef40753a

4. POSITIONS OF MEMBER STATES AND KEY ACTORS

4.1 Israel

Israel supports implementation of the Gaza ceasefire plan with the condition of Hamas disarmament, while remaining critical of UNRWA due to its alleged ties to Hamas. However, Israel backs the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation as an alternative distribution mechanism. At the same time, Israel denies the illegality of West Bank settlements and considers itself the sovereign over the Golan Heights, while maintaining that Syrian Druze do not face discrimination policies. On humanitarian access to the Palestinian territories, Israel adheres to the position that aid restriction and inspection requirements are necessary to prevent armament contraband from reaching Hamas.

4.2 Palestine

The position of Palestine – a non-member observer state of the UN, primarily represented internationally by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian Authority (PA) – contrasts with the position of Israel. The official stance demands the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state on all territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war. It demands full sovereignty over resources and an end to military administration, forced displacement, and restrictions on movement throughout the occupied territories.

4.3 USA

In 2024, the US fully suspended UNRWA funding, while backing the Board of Peace and other alternative mechanisms of providing humanitarian aid. The US mediated the 2025 ceasefire which allowed it to reopen some humanitarian access. As to the Golan Heights, the US has not taken a distinct stance towards the territory's humanitarian conditions.

4.4 EU

The EU remains a leading donor to the Palestinian territories. It consistently calls for rapid and unimpeded aid, while supporting the UNRWA mission and actively working on facilitating crossing-point access. Simultaneously, the EU condemns occupation of the Golan Heights by Israel and supports UNDOF’s mandate.

4.5 Egypt

Egypt remains central to the physical humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing. The state firmly opposes any permanent displacement of Palestinians in Sinai. In the Golan Heights, Egypt generally supports the Arab Peace Initiative, which includes lifting of restrictions and provision of humanitarian and economic movement in occupied Arab territories.

4.6 Syria

Syria's stance towards Israel as of September 2026 is more restrained than it used to be, prioritising restoring the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and de-escalation of the conflict. Despite the current demand for a full withdrawal of Israeli military forces to the pre-December 2024 lines[57], Damascus's stance on the restoration of sovereignty over the Golan Heights remains a non-negotiable, long-term position. The members of the League of Arab States (LAS) and of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in general, however, follow the consensus established since the Arab Peace Initiative (2002), that demands "full withdrawal in exchange for full normalisation", and view the occupation of the Golan and Palestinian territories as a primary source of regional destabilisation[58]. Furthermore, LAS continues to advocate for increased and sustained funding for UNRWA and demands the lifting of all restrictions on humanitarian access and economic movements in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

4.7 Russia

Russia – the permanent member of the Security Council that does not associate itself with the Global North – firmly supports the international legal framework for settlement, anchored in UN Security Council resolutions adopted in the past. It also opposes unilateral attempts to alter the existing legal status and institutional structure of the occupied territories, and continues its steady diplomatic support for the mandate and funding of UNRWA, as well as of UNDOF[59].

4.8 China

China, as the second permanent member of the Security Council that does not associate itself with the Global North, also follows a consistent pro-Arab stance, advocating for a two-state solution, as well as the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Golan Heights. China also contributes to UNRWA; most recently, China and UNRWA rolled out a US$ 1 million food assistance initiative[60].

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[57] The Times of Israel, "Syria says it's working 'seriously' on diplomatic solution with Israel despite attacks" available at: https://www.timesofisrael.com/syria-says-its-working-seriously-on-diplomatic-solution-with-israel-despite-attacks/

[58] The Elders, "Q&A: the Arab Peace Initiative," available at: https://theelders.org/news/qa-arab-peace-initiative

[59] Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, "Statement by Permanent Representative Vassily Nebenzia at a UNSC Briefing on UNRWA" available at:https://russiaun.ru/en/news/28012025

[60] UNRWA, "China and UNRWA roll out US$ 1 million food assistance initiative for Bedouin and herder communities in the occupied West Bank" available at: https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/news-releases/china-and-unrwa-roll-out-us-1-million-food-assistance-initiative-bedouin

4.9 Iran

The position of Iran is more radical in regards to Israel, especially taking into account the ongoing conflict between the two countries. Iran uncompromisingly rejects Israel's legitimacy and its control over the occupied territories, using these as active fronts for the "Axis of Resistance". Historically, it has entrenched proxy forces along Israel's borders, particularly within Syria until very recently[61]. Iran continues to stay one of the biggest supporters of the Palestinian resistance. Until the most recent war, the country used to contribute humanitarian aid to Palestine in the form of medical supplies and food[62].

4.10 Turkey

Turkey also remains a strong supporter of Palestine, continuously providing diplomatic and humanitarian aid to the Palestinians, particularly in the Gaza Strip, as well as maintaining a highly critical stance on the annexation of the Golan Heights. As a member of the OIC, it routinely condemns Israeli policies regarding OPT. Moreover, Turkey provides direct humanitarian and infrastructural aid through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) in cooperation with the Turkish Red Crescent.

The states of the Global North, in general, remain rhetorically committed to a two-state solution and formal non-recognition of the Golan annexation. In practice, however, the United States has broken from this consensus by recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights and treating the question of Palestinian statehood as unresolved, thus mirroring Israel's position. Meanwhile, the EU and most other Western states formally maintain non-recognition but have been reluctant to convert that position into concrete measures against Israel.

In contrast to the Global North views on the issue, the Global South – most of which follows the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) – views the occupation of the Golan Heights and Palestinian territories through the lens of decolonisation, anti-annexation, and defense of national sovereignty. That said, the majority among them sustains a voting bloc for annual UN General Assembly resolutions on the Golan Heights and Palestine questions, as well as uniformly rejects unilateral actions by the major powers of the Global North, such as the United States.

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[61] Jerusalem Center for Foreign Affairs (JCFA), "Defensible Borders with Syria," available at: https://jcfa.org/defensible-borders-with-syria/

[62] AA, "Iran sends 60 tons of humanitarian aid for Gaza", available at:https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/iran-sends-60-tons-of-humanitarian-aid-for-gaza/3028152

5. CONCLUSION

The situation in the Palestinian Territories and the Golan Heights remains complex, especially in the Gaza Strip. Several kinds of restrictions can be observed across the territories, varying by the specificities of each region: in the Golan Heights, these concern water access and freedom of movement; in Palestine, food access and personal safety. Although the populations living in these territories share similar struggles, the scale of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is hardly comparable to the situation in the Golan Heights, or even the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Strip faces a recognized famine, mass displacement, and the near-total collapse of civil infrastructure.

Most UN resolutions are critical of Israeli actions and consider the Syrian Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, and parts of Gaza to be occupied. Narratives surrounding the humanitarian situation are generally framed against Israel, which has not made comparably extensive documentation publicly available to counter such perception.

The positions of member states remain sharply divided along well-established political lines. Occasional realignments, however, do occur – most notably, the shift in the US position during Donald Trump's second presidency. This very divide has so far prevented the issue from being resolved politically. Meanwhile, political disagreement should not stand in the way of resolving the humanitarian dimensions of the issue that fall within ECOSOC's mandate. Resolutions addressing issues such as water access, humanitarian funding, and infrastructure reconstruction remain within reach even when political consensus on the territories' final status is absent.

6. GLOSSARY

1948 Arab-Israeli War – a military conflict fought between the newly declared State of Israel and a coalition of neighboring Arab nations from May 1948 to July 1949.

1967 Six-Day War – a military conflict fought from June 5 to June 10, 1967, in which Israel won against an alliance of Arab nations including Egypt, Jordan, and Syria.

1973 Yom Kippur War – a military conflict fought from October 6 to October 25, 1973, in which a coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria launched a surprise joint attack against Israel.

Area division (A, B, C) – the West Bank is divided into Areas A, B, and C under the 1995 Oslo II Accord, creating temporary administrative zones that split control between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA):

Area A: about 18% of the West Bank, full civil and security control by the Palestinian Authority;
Area B: about 22% of the West Bank, shared control;
Area C: about 60% of the West Bank, full civil and security control by Israel.

Druze – a monotheistic ethnoreligious group living in the Middle East.

Geneva Conventions – a series of four international treaties and three additional protocols that set the rules for how people must be treated during war.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) – person forced to flee their homes who remain within.

Intifada – an Arabic word that means “uprising”, and is used to refer to two major periods of Palestinian protests and rebellions against Israeli occupation.

Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) – a legal and geographic term which refers to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For precise geographical information, use an interactive map of Palestine:

Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and Critical Threats Project (CTP), Interactive Map: Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip (19 February 2025), available at: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2e746151991643e39e64780f0674f7dd

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the occupied Palestinian territory (OCHA oPt) – a field office of OCHA that coordinates emergency humanitarian response, monitors and reports on the humanitarian situation, and advocates for the protection of civilians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Weekly reports on the current situation by OCHA can be found on their website:

OCHA, Updates | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – occupied Palestinian territory, available at: https://www.ochaopt.org/updates

Oslo Accords – two 1990s peace agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) designed to give Palestinians limited self-governance.

Palestinian Authority (PA) – the interim self-governing body established in 1994 through the Oslo Accords peace agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) – an umbrella political coalition recognised internationally as the official representative of the Palestinian people.

The Green Line – the 1949 armistice demarcation boundary set after the Arab-Israeli War, separating Israel from the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and neighboring Arab countries.

United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) – an active United Nations peacekeeping mission established on May 31, 1974, to maintain the ceasefire between Israel and Syria. For precise geographical information, use an interactive map of Syria and the Golan Heights:

Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and Critical Threats Project (CTP), Interactive Map: Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria (27 February 2026), available at: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1933cb1d315f4db3a4f4dcc5ef40753a

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) – an organisation that provides aid and support to Palestinian refugees, created in 1949 after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

The United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) – an online collection of texts of current and historical United Nations decisions and publications concerning the question of Palestine, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and other issues related to the Middle East situation. The UNISPAL collection can be found on the official website:

UNISPAL, Documents Collection: United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine, available at: https://www.un.org/unispal/documents/