



The Big Picture: Israel- Palestine conflict

CONTEXT:

- India, the United States, and several other countries have **called for calm and restraint amid escalating tensions and violence between Israel and Palestine.**

CURRENT ESCALATION:

- **Israeli armed forces stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Haram esh-Sharif in Jerusalem**, ahead of a march by Zionist nationalists commemorating Israel's capture of the eastern half of the city in 1967.
- **In retaliation, Hamas, the Islamist militant group that runs Gaza, fired dozens of rockets. The Israelis launched an airstrike on Gaza in response.**

WHAT IS BEHIND THE CURRENT ESCALATION?

- Tensions have been building up since the start of Ramzan in mid-April when **Israeli police set up barricades at the Damascus Gate outside the occupied Old City**, preventing Palestinians from gathering there.
- The **threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah** escalated the crisis.

WHAT IS THE SHEIKH JARRAH DISPUTE?

- Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced out of their homes when the State of Israel was created in historical Palestine in 1948.
- **Twenty-eight of those Palestinian families moved to Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem** to settle there.
- In 1956, when **East Jerusalem was ruled by Jordan**, it facilitated the construction of houses for these families in Sheikh Jarrah.
- But **Israel would capture East Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967.**
- By the early 1970s, Jewish agencies started demanding the families leave the land. Jewish committees claimed that the houses sat on land they purchased in 1885.
- Earlier this year, the **Central Court in East Jerusalem upheld a decision to evict four Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah** in favor of Jewish settlers.
- The Israeli Supreme Court was scheduled to hear the case on May 10.

WHY JERUSALEM AT CENTRE OF CONFLICT?

- Jerusalem has been at the centre of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to the **original 1947 UN partition plan, Jerusalem was proposed to be an international city.**
- But in the first Arab Israel war of 1948, the **Israelis captured the western half of the city, and Jordan took the eastern part**, including the Old City that houses Haram al-Sharif.
- **Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third holiest site, and the Dome of the Rock** are situated within Haram al-Sharif.



- **One side of the compound, called Temple Mount by the Jews, is the Wailing Wall (Western Wall), which is believed to be the remains of the Second Jewish Temple, the holiest site in Judaism.**
- Since its annexation, Israel has expanded settlements in East Jerusalem, which is now home for some 220,000 Jews. Jews born in East Jerusalem are Israeli citizens, while Palestinians in the city are given conditional residency permits.
- **Israel sees the whole city as its “unified, eternal capital”, a claim endorsed by Donald Trump when he was U.S. President but not recognised by most other countries.**
- **The Palestinian leadership across the political spectrum have maintained that they would not accept any compromise formula for the future Palestinian state unless East Jerusalem is its capital.**

WORLD CONCERNS

- **US President Joe Biden also called for de-escalation** of the deadly violence but also added that **Israel has a right to defend itself** if it is attacked by thousands of rockets
- **UN Secretary General António Guterres expressed “deep concern”** over the violence and the possible eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in East Jerusalem.
- The **UAE**, which recently recognized as Israel as a state and sealed a historic peace agreement to normalize relations with it, has **“strongly condemned” the clashes and the planned evictions in Jerusalem.**
- **Saudi Arabia**, which has not opposed Israel’s recognition by UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan, said it “rejects Israel’s plans and measures to evict dozens of Palestinians from their homes in Jerusalem”.
- Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that **Israel would not allow any extremist element to undermine the quiet Jerusalem.**

SCENARION IN 2020:

- The Government of Israel had set **July 1 as the date when it could begin to annex Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank, as well as in the strategic Jordan Valley.**
- The move was endorsed by a Middle East plan unveiled by then US President Donald Trump.
- Egypt, France, Germany, Jordan said that any annexation of Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 would be a violation of international law and imperil the foundations of the peace process.
- EU had mounted a diplomatic campaign against the annexation.

ISRAEL PALESTINE CONFLICT TIMELINE

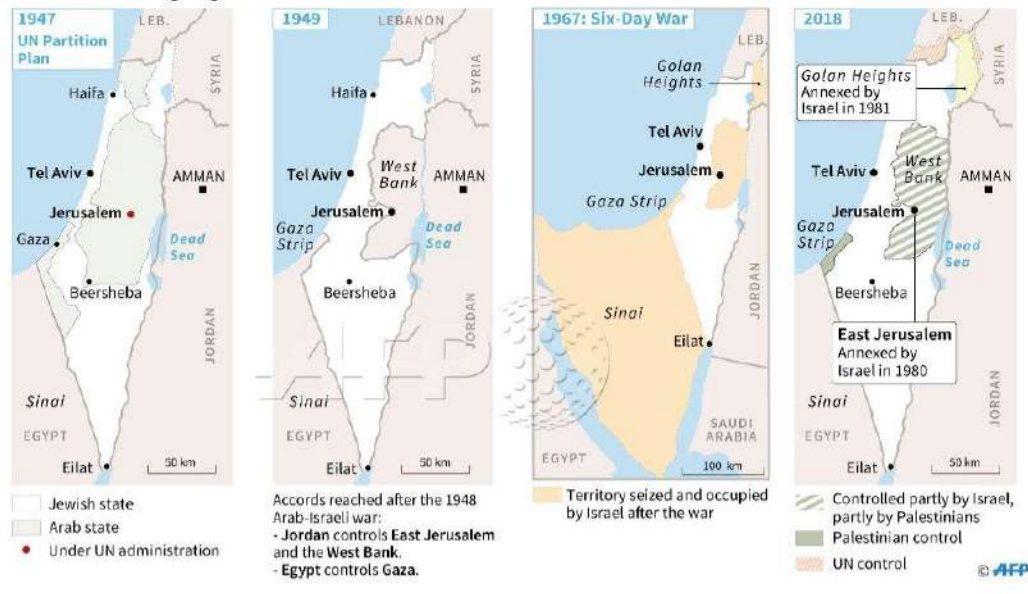
1799	Napoleon offers Palestine as a home to the Jews.
1882	Rishon Le Zion, a major Zionist settlement is established in Palestine.
1885	The term Zionism is first coined.
1897	First Zionist congress is held in Switzerland and first Zionist organization is founded.
1916	Sykes-Picot agreement is signed dividing middle east between French and British.
1917	Balfour declaration is created. Britain promises a Jewish national home on Arab land.



1919	King-Crane Commission on the future of Palestine.
1922	League of Nations gives approval to British promises.
1929	Al-Buraq uprising, the first mass protests against increased Jewish migration.
1935	Peel Commission recommends partition of Palestine.
1947	UN adopts Resolution 181, a partition plan for Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states which Palestine rejects.
1948	The state of Israel is created.
1949	First Arab-Israeli war and Israel seizes more land than agreed in armistices. Gaza strip is created. UN establishes UNRWA.
1950	Jordan assumes control of the West Bank.
1964	Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) is formed.
1967	6-day war and Israel occupies rest of Palestine including West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights (Syria), Sinai (Egypt). UNSC calls on Israel to withdraw from these areas.
1978	Egypt and Israel sign the Camp David accords
1987	First Intifada is launched in occupied Palestine territory.
1991	Madrid Peace Conference ends.
1993	Oslo Accord Signed. Palestine and Israeli leaders sign a Declaration of Principles in Washington. Here the PLO is recognized by Israel and given some powers in Gaza. The PLO recognizes Israel's right to exist. Violence is stopped. They agreed on a plan to implement a two-state solution as part of the Oslo Accords, leading to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA).
2000	Camp David II Summit where Israel and PLO renew final status negotiations.
2002	Israel reoccupies Palestinian cities in West Bank in the wake of 2 nd Intifada.
2005	Israel agrees to withdraw from Gaza but maintains control of airspace and some imports/exports while restricting some travel.
2008	Israel invades Gaza in Operation Cast Lead.
2014	50-day conflict over the summer in Operation Protective Edge after more rockets are launched at Israel. Israel invades Gaza again.
2017	U.S. announces decision to relocate the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, recognizing the city as Israel's capital.



Israel's changing borders



KEY TERMS:

- **Fatah and Hamas:**
 - Fatah is the largest faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization closely identified with the leadership of its founder Yasser Arafat. Hamas is a Palestinian Sunni-Islamic fundamentalist organization.
 - In the 2006 parliamentary election, Fatah lost its majority in the Palestinian parliament to Hamas.
 - This led to a conflict between Fatah and Hamas, with Fatah retaining control of the Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank, while Hamas dominated Gaza.
 - Both are pledged to restore to Islamic rule the whole of Mandate Palestine.
 - Their fundamental disagreement is over the strategy for achieving this common purpose, i.e Fatah believes more in peaceful process, whereas Hamas wants to resort to violence.
- **First Intifada:** Palestinians living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip fomented the riots begun in 1987, known as the first intifada.
- **Madrid Conference of 1991** was a peace conference co-sponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union. It was an attempt by the international community to revive the Israeli–Palestinian peace process through negotiations, involving Israel and the Palestinians as well as Arab countries, including Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.
- **Oslo Peace Accord:** With the mediation of US and Russia in 1993, Israel and PLO signed the Oslo Peace accord which was based on the concept of two-state solution.
- **Camp David Summit (2000):** It aimed to help the two sides finally agree on a settlement, but the talks eventually failed. The violence led to the Second Intifada.
- **Second Intifada (2000-05):** In 2000, a more violent Palestine Uprising started and a large number of civilians died on both sides.
- **Gaza Expulsion plan (2005):** This is a unilateral disarmament plan by Israel by which Israel's defence forces leave the Gaza strip and four settlements in the northern West Bank.



INDIA'S STAND ON PALESTINE-ISRAEL CONFLICT

- India has consistently supported the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to a State and the consequent imperative need for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region based on United Nations Security Council resolutions as well as the principle of "Land for Peace."

1936	Congress working committee sent greetings to Palestine and on 27th September first observed Palestine day.
1939	Session of INC adopted a resolution on Palestine and looked forward to the emergence of an Independent democratic state in Palestine in which Jews rights would be protected. India was the member of UN special committee on Palestine.
1974	India became the first non – Arab country to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestine people.
1980	GOI announced in Parliament India's decision to accord full diplomatic recognition to the PLO office in New Delhi. It was after this that Yasser Arafat paid a three day visit to India, during which he described India as an 'eternal friend'.
1988	India recognized Palestine as a state. Indian Government has constructed the Palestine embassy building in New Delhi, as a gift of the people and GOI to the Palestine people.
2014-15	India favored UNHRC's resolution to probe Israel's human rights violations in Gaza. Despite supporting probe, India abstained from voting against Israel in UNHRC IN 2015.
Until 2017	India's position was that it supported "the Palestinian cause and called for a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognised borders, side by side at peace with Israel".
2018	India de-hyphenated its relationship with Israel and Palestine as part of its West Asia policy to treat both the countries mutually independent and exclusive.
2019	India voted in favor of a decision introduced by Israel in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that objected to granting consultative status to a Palestinian non-governmental organization
2020	India asked Israel and Palestine to resolve issues between them through direct negotiations and engage with each other to find an acceptable "two-states solution" for peaceful coexistence.
2021	At the UNSC meet recently, India reaffirmed its support for Palestine, but stopped short of making any direct reference to the status of Jerusalem or the future Israel-Palestine borders.

WAY FORWARD:

- Both Israel and Palestine should **immediately resume the peace talks under the guidance of the UNSC.**
- Further **any successful peace initiative would need to resolve the four core issues: West Bank borders/settlements, Israeli security, Palestinian refugees, and Jerusalem.**
- There must be **proper adherence to UNSC resolution 2334** which states that Israel's settlement activity has no legal validity and demands that it stop such activity.
- India should **counsel Israel to exercise restraint and move towards a two-state solution.**
- The **best solution is a "two-state solution"** that would establish Palestine as an independent state in Gaza and most of the West Bank, leaving the rest of the land to Israel. <https://youtu.be/uyFPmpf-N2A>



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