



# Policy Brief

## Israeli Atrocity

## against the Palestinians:

## Where is the Humanity?

This policy brief is an outcome of the webinar on the Israel-Palestine Crisis, 2021 organized by the Center for Peace Studies (CPS) of SIPG, NSU

### Background

The decades-long Israeli-Palestinian issue had worsened in the second week of May 2021 as the Israeli forces unleashed their atrocity against the Palestinians. A fragile ceasefire went into effect between Hamas and Israel on 21 May 2021 bringing an end to 11 days of intense fighting which is not enough for tackling the future violence in Palestine. The Palestinian death toll after the ceasefire stood at 248, including 66 children, with more than 1,900 people wounded from Israeli air and artillery attacks. And at least 12 people, including two children were killed in Israel, by rocket fire.<sup>1</sup> The atrocity had also fuelled a humanitarian catastrophe that touched nearly every civilian living in Gaza and the occupied West Bank. International humanitarian law has been ignored for decades, and killing innocent Palestinian civilians, including children, is a disgrace to humanity. This atrocity against the Palestinians can be termed both war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

Around 6.8 million Palestinians live in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), made up of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The sole governing power of this area is the Israeli authority. Since 1948 their laws and policies were designed and implemented to ensure control over demography, political power, and land.



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While the Palestinians are restricted and denied fundamental rights, Jewish Israelis in the the West Bank have privileged legal status, creating significant disparities between the two groups regarding identity documents (e.g., passports), mobility, and right to free speech/protest. The authorities have control over resources, borders, and airspace, thus systematically denying Palestinians to have proper infrastructures like roads, health care system, and other services. Despite the West Bank being occupied territory under international law of occupation, Israel continue to unilaterally annex it, which they also previously did with East Jerusalem in 1967. International criminal law has developed two crimes against humanity regarding systematic discrimination and repression: apartheid and persecution. The discrimination and oppression faced by the Palestinians over the years by the Israeli authority are tantamount to both of these crimes.<sup>2</sup>

This human rights violation is not taking place in a vacuum. Ideologically it is justified and driven by a racist and colonialist settler movement called Zionism which causes injustice and traumas faced by Jews to withhold policies that marginalize Palestinians.<sup>3</sup> Though Israel was created in 1948 followed by the long years of calamities, this crisis commenced and sustained since 1917 when Balfour Declaration was made. In 1948 during the first Arab-Israeli War, Israel became victorious that displaced many Palestinians and divided the territory into 3 parts: The State of Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. After the Camp David Accords in 1979, relations between Israel and its neighbors improved but, the issue of Palestinian self-governance remained disputed. Thousands of Palestinians rose against the Israeli government during the first and second intifada in 1979 and 2005 respectively. The 1993 Oslo I Accord, and 1995 Oslo II Accord also failed to bring lasting peace in this region.<sup>4</sup>

A resolution or justice for Palestinians is still being debated on international platforms as hegemonic nations either stay silent on the issue or outright support the Israeli authorities. For instance, the USA vetoed around four UNSC resolutions that condemn Israel's illegal settlements in Palestine. The US President Joe Biden has expressed to extend the support for Israel and their 'right to defend itself'- disregarding the power imbalance between Palestinians, with restricted rights and severe lack of resources and Israel's military.



The root cause of the latest violence is due to the dispute over East Jerusalem, where the Palestinians are in majority. There were several protests before a Supreme Court ruling on the eviction of several Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah. Although the Israeli government described it as a dispute over real estate, many Arabs termed it ethnic cleansing as the Israeli settlers forced Palestinians out of their homes.<sup>5</sup>




Violence broke out during Ramadan at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem after weeks of demonstrations by the Palestinian protesters. On May 10, the Israeli forces carried out artillery bombardments and airstrikes against targets in Gaza, which included residential buildings, refugee camps, media headquarters, and healthcare facilities. The injustice and atrocities by Israel reminded the world how they had failed to hold the multiple perpetrators accountable for this crisis.

## Key Challenges:

- Many earlier peace talks like the Camp David Accord; Oslo Peace Process, etc., did not become fruitful as Israel, backed by global powers, did not heed any of it and intensified the atrocities against the Palestinians in recent times.
- International Humanitarian Laws and various Human rights are being neglected and violated by the Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Still, the western world is giving a blind eye to it.
- The lack of a possible and long-term solution to the crisis has increased the Palestinians' sufferings over the period and keeps on lingering through generations.
- The Palestinians are losing their land and lives as the Israeli occupation and war crimes against them continue.



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- The role of the United Nations, Organization of the Islamic Countries (OIC), Arab League, and other international organizations is questionable as they cannot play an active role to make a peaceful solution.

- Over the years, the one-sided western media narrative has tried to cover up the Israeli apartheid acts, thus obstructing in resolving the crisis.

## Way Forward:


- From previous experiences, it is apprehended that only the ceasefire is not enough for tackling the future violence in Palestine, so a long-term solution is necessary. Until then, the resistance against the Israeli occupation forces is the only option left for the Palestinian people.
- Based on a two-state solution, the immediate establishment of the State of Palestine should be the core of all collective efforts by the international community.
- The United Nations and International Community, including the OIC, Arab League, ICJ and ICC, should take necessary steps in resolving the crisis and making Israel accountable for the crimes against humanity.
- New investigations such as that of ICC should be supported by the international community so that justice can be ensured for the Palestinians and get their land, freedom, and livelihoods back.
- An independent international commission must be formed to investigate and take appropriate legal actions against the Israeli authority for alleged war crimes and atrocities perpetrated upon the Palestinians.



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- The one-sided western media narrative has changed as social media has democratized and opened space for a bigger narrative. Social media and other international media should play their role impartially and cover the plights of the Palestinians.
  - This time Israel has lost the cultural war as the brutality of the Israeli occupation forces has surfaced the social media. Many people across the globe, especially the westerners, showed their support for the Palestine cause and protested against the Israeli apartheid acts.
  - The crisis has to be seen from a humanitarian perspective; instead, just a conflict between the Muslims and the Jews.
  - The Palestinians' fight for their sovereignty is an emotional issue, not just for Muslims but for a person with any sense of justice, equity, freedom for people, and human rights.
  - Bangladesh's position is unambiguous as its unflinching support for the Palestinians prevails.



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