



TORONTO MODEL UNITED NATIONS II

# SPECPOL

## Director's Letter

Dear delegates,

On behalf of TMUN, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to every one of you to SPECPOL. I am extremely excited to be directing this committee, and every one of you is important to making the experience amazing. My name is Andrew Jiang and I will be your director for SPECPOL at TMUN 2024.

Now to introduce myself a bit more past my name. This year I am in Grade 12, attending Dr. Frank J. Hayden Secondary School in Burlington, Ontario. As with you all, I have a deep interest in global affairs, world events, public speaking, and working with others to create solutions to problems. My Model UN journey began way back when I was in Grade 6, when I was still trying to overcome the massive amounts of nervousness that I would face whenever having to speak in front of a large group of people. After years of attending conferences and even picking up an award from the Ivy League, my confidence became better and better and my experience only grew in Model UN. Outside of Model UN, I have a deep passion in STEM, especially in math and computer science. On top of other things, I enjoy practicing math and coding something random from time to time.

Now, let me introduce you to SPECPOL at TMUN 2024. In this committee, delegates will work through and solve pressing issues that have affected and will continue to affect the lives of millions. It is imperative that delegates are able to find middle ground when drafting their resolutions in order to pass a resolution that will be able to improve the lives of millions. From decolonization to refugees, these are very important and sensitive topics that must be addressed professionally and carefully. With that being said, while this background guide does cover the fundamentals, naturally such large topics cannot be contained within less than 40 pages, so I implore all delegates to continue on with further research on their own.

I sincerely hope that everyone will have fun, meet new people, and learn a lot before, during, and after the committee. After all, that is the spirit of Model UN. Should you have any questions about anything related to the conference, our committee, or this background guide, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at [1jiangand2@gmail.com](mailto:1jiangand2@gmail.com). We look forward to seeing you at TMUN 2024!

Sincerely,

Andrew Jiang

Director of SPECPOL at TMUN 2024

## Introduction to Committee

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee, or SPECPOL, is the fourth committee of the United Nations General Assembly and is very important to peacekeeping around the world. It deals with a variety of issues, including decolonization, peaceful uses of outer space, peacekeeping and stability of different regions, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and effects of atomic radiation. When the fourth committee was first created, its mandate was to deal with trusteeship and decolonization. After the dismantling of the trusteeship system, it was then merged with the special committee to create what is today known as SPECPOL.

Every year the committee meets later in the year, around September to November. There, many draft resolutions, with a big focus on decolonization, are passed. A notable resolution that passed in 2022 was “Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East”, which saw a vote of 157 in favour, 5 against (Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, United States), and 4 abstaining. This resolution essentially sought to gradually allocate more UN budget towards the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees to fund its operational expenses. <sup>1</sup>

At TMUN 2024, SPECPOL will deal with the topic of decolonization and Palestinian refugees. Many decolonization efforts in the past have led to chaos. From subversion of state, to war, to mass genocide, it is safe to say that the standard under which a nation follows when undergoing decolonization is very lackluster and needs work. On the other hand, many Palestine refugees find themselves in less than humane living conditions and struggle to keep up with daily life. Delegates must come together and discuss, debate, and pass resolutions that will be able to save many from suffering and make the world a more peaceful and liveable place.

## Important Notes

This background guide was written mostly between July and September 2023, and thus may not be mostly up to date with current events as of the time you are reading this. Also, there is *zero tolerance* for any anti-semitic and/or Islamophobic speech or actions in our committee. While your country may take a tough stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is in no way any need for any hateful speech and/or actions. If any delegate is caught committing such acts, they will be removed from committee at once for the remainder of the conference.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://press.un.org/en/2022/ga12481.doc.htm>

## Topic A: Issues Surrounding Decolonization

### The Issues of Decolonization

Decolonization, to put simply, is the process of granting a colony independence, effectively granting it self determination. Throughout history, decolonization has seen many forms, from wars being fought, to mutual agreements between states, or even following century long contracts. As it has seen many different forms, it has also seen many different issues.

The creation of a new state brings many things to the table. A new economy, a new government, a new sense of identity, and new international recognition. What does get overlooked a lot of the time is the sheer amount of violence and destruction that can come with decolonization. Leaving a nation with an essentially vacant spot for government is bound to attract different and opposing political groups, which can lead to wars and disputes. Furthermore, many cases of decolonization have neglected the most important thing any country should stand for, that is its people. From ethnic differences, to religious conflicts, many every-day citizens have also suffered due to mass displacement, genocide, and many other atrocities due to a lack of security and consideration during decolonization. In this background guide, we will define “failed decolonization” to be any case of decolonization that has caused either the people to suffer, hindered the prosperity of the nation, or has left the nation with no foreseeable future.<sup>2</sup>

Another question with decolonization is who gets to decide the fate of the nation? Should the citizens be allowed to decide, or is it up to whoever is the strongest? Or is it the choice of the nation who the former colony belonged to? All of these uncertainties lead more or less to more conflict, which leads further into the suffering of the people.

### A Brief History of Western Colonialism

Western dominance of the world can be traced back all the way back to the late 15th century to 16th century. Modern colonialism started to really gain more attention in Europe following the discoveries of a sea route in Africa’s southern coast in 1488 as well as Christopher Columbus’s discovery of America in 1492. This led to the *Treaty of Tordesillas*, an agreement between the Spanish and Portuguese monarchs.<sup>3</sup> They agreed to draw a longitudinal (i.e. North-South) line through the Atlantic

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<sup>2</sup>

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/documents&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1703282026202498&usg=AOvVaw3vXh4X3-lm30j4axBX1LMp>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.worldhistory.org/Treaty\\_of\\_Tordesillas/](https://www.worldhistory.org/Treaty_of_Tordesillas/)

Ocean roughly 555 kilometres west of the Cabo Verde Islands, whereby the land to the west of the line was granted to Spain and the land to the east was granted to Portugal. A map of the treaty is shown in Figure 1.1. This essentially granted the Americas to Spain, and West Africa to Portugal. The line was moved, in the following decade in 1506, some 1500 kilometres further west, enabling the Portuguese to claim the eastern coast of what is now Brazil.<sup>4</sup> This treaty also allowed the Portuguese to control India. The treaty is what really marked the beginning of the spheres of influence by Portugal and Spain around the world. Portugal and Spain both had major influence especially in places like South America, Africa, and also Asia. Most countries in South America today were once colonies of Portugal, or Spain, or even both. The majority of nations in the Americas south of the United States are Spanish speaking today, with all but three nations in South America being primarily Hispanic. The outliers in South America are Guyana (which speaks English), Suriname (which speaks Dutch), and Brazil (which speaks Portuguese). One might also include French Guiana, which is an overseas French department. Even these outliers go to show how much influence Europe had on the Americas alone, with Canada and the United States having a fair share of English, French, and Spanish speakers.<sup>56</sup>



Figure 1.1: A map of the *Treaty of Tordesillas*

Meanwhile on the other side of the globe, colonization was also making its way to many parts of Asia and the Pacific. Many European nations had increased presence in Asia due to trade. Great Britain had formed a company known as *The East India Company*<sup>78</sup>, in December of 1600. The company was formed originally so that Britain could earn a share in spice trading, which was at the time predominated by Spain and Portugal. The company faced opposition by the Dutch and the Portuguese, however the company won a decisive victory over the Portuguese in India in 1612. In the 1620s, the company utilized slave labour to help them with their productivity. At the end of the day, the company was not just a trading company but also an agent for the British to aid in their colonizing goals in Asia. Now, for some other nations, in 1557, Macau was leased to Portugal from China for a price of

<sup>4</sup> <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/treaty-tordesillas/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-colonialism>

<sup>6</sup> <https://brewminate.com/the-three-waves-of-early-modern-and-modern-european-colonialism/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/stories/articles/2021/10/18/british-trade-and-colonialism>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/money/topic/East-India-Company>

500 tael per year. Incidentally, Macau was also the very last European colony in Asia, handed back to the People's Republic of China in 1999, with British Hong Kong having similarly been handed back two years prior. These were not the only instances of China leasing cities to European nations. Another example of this was Guangzhouwan, a territory on the coast of modern day Zhanjiang, China. It was leased to France and was administered by French Indochina. French Indochina was the grouping of French colonies in Southeast Asia, comprising Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, along with the aforementioned Guangzhouwan.<sup>9</sup> On another hand, Great Britain also had a dramatic presence in the Asian-Pacific. A few of the colonies they owned in no particular order include Australia, New Zealand, Solon Islands, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Hong Kong, Weihaiwei (yet another Chinese leased territory), and many more.

Let's go to the late 19th century now and focus our attention on another continent. At this point, in the last century, many American nations have already achieved decolonization and independence from their European ruling powers. A few examples include Canada, the United States, Mexico, Brazil, and almost all Spanish colonies in Central and South America. Meanwhile, in Africa, the very opposite was happening. 1881 marked the beginning of the "scramble for Africa", otherwise known as the "Partition of Africa" or "Conquest of Africa"<sup>10</sup> Prior to the scramble for Africa, Africa was not really in the interests of most European powers, apart from Portugal (who had a head start in Africa due to the *Treaty of Tordesillas*). However, by the late 18th to mid 19th centuries, many detailed maps of Africa had been made, with interest in the continent growing more and more. King Leopold II of Belgium, out of jealousy towards Queen Victoria of Great Britain, sought to have an empire of his own. In an effort to present himself as a noble person in the eyes of the locals, Leopold presented himself as a philanthropist, claiming that he would allow free trade and abolish slavery in his newly claimed African land that he called the "Congo Free State". All of this was a guise intended to hide his true intentions to the other European states.<sup>11</sup> He ended up working the local population unethically, even leading to deaths of many, for his own gain. As other European nations began catching on to the potential self-gain that was Africa, more and more European nations carried out their own expeditions into Africa.

After rising tensions, a meeting in Berlin was called by German chancellor Otto Von Bismarck in November of 1884 to discuss the colonization of Africa.<sup>12</sup> This meeting is known as the Berlin Conference. In the conference, it was agreed that the Congo River and Niger River mouths would be

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.worldatlas.com/what-was-the-scramble-for-africa.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.worldhistoryedu.com/scramble-for-africa-history-berlin-conference-outcome-facts/>

<sup>11</sup>

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/whp-origins/era-6-the-long-nineteenth-century-1750-ce-to-1914-ce/x23c41635548726c4:other-materials-origins-era-6/a/the-berlin-conference>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Leopold-II-king-of-Belgium>

neutral land open to trade, however, part of the Congo Basin ended up being Leopold's personal land. Over the duration of three months, the colonial powers, most notably France, Germany, Great Britain, and Portugal, haggled over geographic boundaries while completely neglecting the already existing cultural and linguistic boundaries of the local people. Eventually, Africa had been divided among the Europeans into 50 countries.<sup>13</sup> A map of it is shown in Figure 1.2.



Figure 1.2: A map of Africa showing which European power owned which parts of it at the time.

As you may have noticed, the subtitle for the whole previous segment was labelled “A **Brief** History of Colonialism”. As such, I encourage all delegates to look further into how colonialism has shaped how our world looks and functions today, with regards to your own nation so you can build your stance even better.

### **Mass Decolonization**

Throughout much of the 18th and 19th centuries, many nations in the Americas have seen decolonization and official recognition of independence by their former parent nations. Nearly all American-Spanish colonies were decolonized, most of which through revolutions or wars. The same

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.thoughtco.com/berlin-conference-1884-1885-divide-africa-1433556>

could be said for the United States, which declared independence in 1776, with its independence recognized by Great Britain in 1814. Alongside their independence declaration sprung the American Revolutionary War, which lasted between 1775 and 1783 inclusive. Brazil also declared independence from Portugal in 1822, with recognition by the latter in 1825.

As you may have noticed, these dates are parallel to the aforementioned scramble for Africa. The mass decolonization of Africa did not really begin until the 1950s, following World War II into the Cold War. On 12 February 1941, United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met to discuss post war logistics. What resulted was a joint declaration known as the Atlantic Charter.<sup>14</sup> The charter saw the United States and Great Britain's agreement to not seek any territorial gain from the war and opposed territorial changes against the wishes of the people. It also advocated for the self determination of people and that the people should be allowed to choose how their government functioned.

Since the formation of the United Nations, over 80 territories have been decolonized, with varying degrees of success and stability, and today only 17 non-self-governing territories exist, as per the Special Committee on Decolonization's agenda. A lot of progress has been made towards the eradication of colonialism, but it has not been all peachy. Many former colonies have suffered as a consequence of rushed and/or incomplete decolonization processes and internal/external conflicts. This will be talked more about in depth in the upcoming case studies.

SPECPOL in its recent sessions have been talking about many specific territories with regards to their independence and/or integration into their parenting states. These sessions can be found [here](#). The core issue that arises with decolonization on these fronts is the lack of real progress being made. Many territories' problems exist today as a result of disputes. In the case of Western Sahara, the resolutions put forward have been in focus of peaceful negotiations with the main parties involved. In Gibraltar, there is still seemingly no resolution between Spain and the United Kingdom. Despite Spain having ceded Gibraltar to the UK in perpetuity, Spain historically had always claimed Gibraltar and made many attempts to get it back. They were never successful in doing so, and there was even a referendum held in the 20th century, whereby 99% of Gibraltar's population voted to stay with the UK.

Different colonies have different situations and factors, varying vastly, from ethnic groups, to religion, to economic state, to historical agreements, and much more. Needless to say, no territory can be treated the same when undergoing decolonization. However it is imperative that we come to an

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/atlantic-charter>

agreement about how a territory gets to decide its future, whether it be by self determination or decided by another nation, and it is important to define the exact conditions a nation does so. This is the goal of our committee regarding this first topic and I hope that all delegates can provide great insight towards solving these problems.

Upcoming are a few case studies where a lack of standards has failed the territories and its people in a multitude of ways. To clarify, this committee is not trying to solve these individual cases/situations, but rather define a solid process and standard for decolonization such that these sorts of issues can be avoided in the future.

### **Case Study I: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh**

Before their separation in 1947, India and Pakistan were one nation under the name of India (Bangladesh would be part of Pakistan until 1971). At the time, India was controlled by the British, and this was known as “British raj”, meaning “British rule” or “British reign”. The idea of Indian independence was gaining popularity over the start of the 20th century. One major figure was Mahatma Gandhi. Originally supporting Great Britain’s efforts in having Indians aid in World War I, it all changed once the Rowlatt Acts were passed by the British Indian legislature. The act would essentially allow anyone suspected of sedition to be imprisoned without a trial. It was then that Gandhi really began to push independence and began Satyagraha – a form of nonviolent resistance. He had already had some experience in activism during his years in South Africa in the past few decades. Many joined him in Satyagraha and began to protest the British imperial rule of India. Other notable faces were Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal. They called for Satyagraha to be carried out against the Rowlatt Acts. This subsequently led to their arrest in April of 1919. Gandhi would also be arrested a few days later. Many peaceful protestors went to protest their arrests and consequently were fired upon by the British Indian Army, with an estimated death toll from 400 all the way to 1500 people. This event was known as Jallianwala Bagh or Amritsar massacre.<sup>15 16 17 18</sup> Gandhi gained more fame in the 1920s, refashioning the Indian National Congress and leading many peaceful acts against British India, like boycotts of any institutions relating to the British. Throughout the years, Gandhi tried his best to peacefully advocate for the welfare of many different groups in India. Gandhi would be known as one of the most monumental figures in the early independence moments of India.

Fast forward to World War II. At this point, there has been a lot of conflict between Hindus and Muslims and much of Great Britain's resources and money is depleted. In 1946, being no longer able

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mahatma-Gandhi/Emergence-as-nationalist-leader>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.indianculture.gov.in/stories/jallianwala-bagh-massacre>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/event/British-raj>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.culturalindia.net/indian-history/modern-history/indian-independence.html>

to afford the administration of India, the British announced that India would gain its independence. They promised that India would be independent within the next couple of years. At this time, India had many different religious groups, with a majority of Hindus and a leading minority of Muslims. Many Muslims did not enjoy the prospect of being led by a predominantly Hindu nation, and there were campaigns for a separate land for Muslims. The Muslim league in India protested for a Muslim homeland in August of 1946, which led to violent riots, causing some 4000 to 10 000 people being killed. Being afraid of civil war, the British decided that they wanted to get out of India as soon as possible and came to the conclusion that dividing India would be the most straightforward way of India gaining independence. It was officially announced in June of 1947 that India would be partitioned. A British lawyer named Cyril Radcliffe, who'd never been anywhere east of Paris, was tasked with drawing lines to divide India based on the dominating religious groups in different areas of India. This however, excluded the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, which is still disputed to this day (more on this later). Figure 1.3 shows a map of how India was divided, where modern day India was granted to Hindus and Pakistan was granted to Muslims. Pakistan was divided into two main parts, West Pakistan (modern day Pakistan) and East Pakistan (modern day Bangladesh).

What followed was not pretty. Due to the lack of planning on Great Britain's end, there was little to no support to the people after the partition. After the new borders were drawn, many people saw themselves on the wrong side. Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan needed to get to India while Muslims in India needed to get

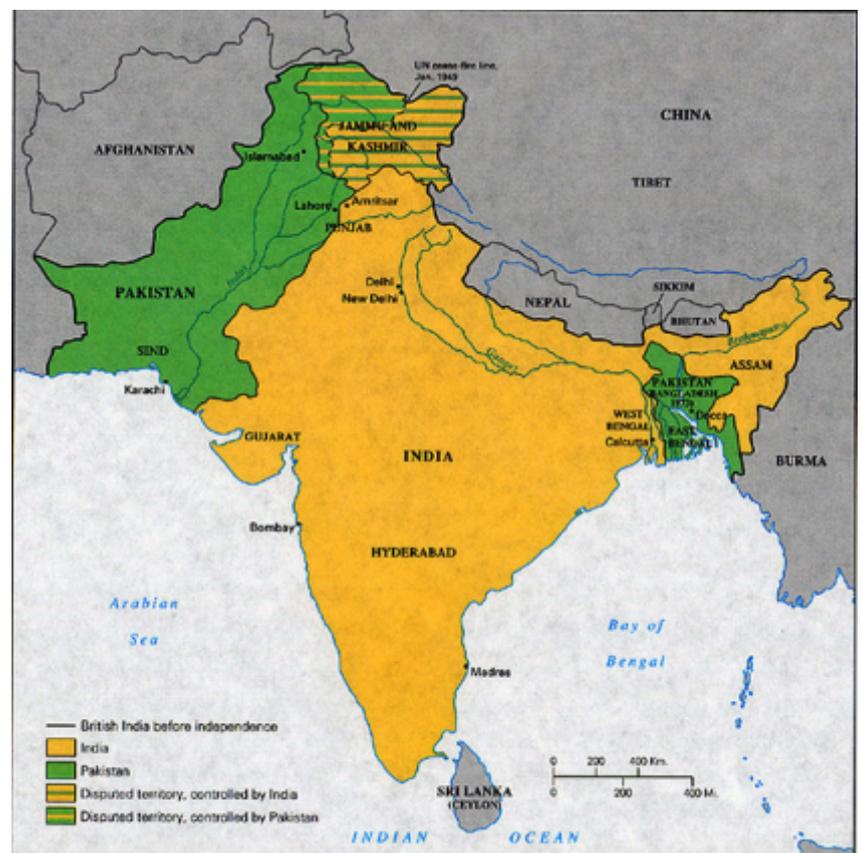


Figure 1.3: A map of the newly partitioned India

to Pakistan. This led to one of the biggest migrations in human history. An estimated ten to twenty million people were forced to abandon their homes in order to reach the correct side of the border. With this came so many killings and death that it could be labelled as genocide. The partition saw the former British province of Punjab virtually split in half, with its western half being the new mostly Muslim Punjab province in Pakistan and the eastern half being the new mostly Hindu and Sikh East Punjab state in India (which would later be divided into the states Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal

Pradesh). It was alleged that certain Sikh leaders in Punjab were calling for the “death to Pakistan”, leading to rebukes by Muslims against Sikhs as well as Hindus, which led to more violence. Muslims in East Punjab were killed and Hindus and Sikhs in West Punjab were killed. Another major place during the partition was the province of Bengal. It was divided into West Bengal to India and East Bengal to Pakistan, which would later be renamed East Pakistan and eventually became Bangladesh. Interestingly, the districts of Murshidabad and Malda were given to the Indian side, despite having a majority Muslim population, whilst the Khulna district was given to Pakistan, with a Hindu majority. Thousands of Hindus in the Pakistani East Bengal saw themselves being attacked, forcing as many as hundreds of thousands to seek refuge in India. The overall death toll of the partition is an estimated two hundred thousand to one million people. On top of this, tens of thousands of Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim women were raped or abducted. The partition of India is a great example of the lack of standards to decolonization and the lack of a proper system that would ensure the welfare and rights of the people after achieving self governance. It brought about massive genocide, forced migration, and a great refugee crisis. Hunger and poverty was prominent among millions.

But... we aren't quite done yet. Recall that Pakistan had two main sections, West Pakistan and East Pakistan. While both were tied over their fear of Indian dominance, they also very much had their differences. East Pakistan was East Bengal, and its main language was Bengali. The Pakistani government sought to impose Urdu as its official language. This sparked an opposition movement due to differences in linguistics and culture of the East versus the West. Another major cause of their tensions were due to neglect and exploitation of the East by the West. Despite having a smaller population, West Pakistan allocated itself much more money than East Pakistan. Furthermore, East Pakistan had many ties with the Indian West Bengali, much to West Pakistan's dismay. Another major thing was that East Pakistan did not have a Muslim majority, and in fact had a mixture of different cultures. The conflict lasted for decades until finally it ended. In 1970 to 1971, a separatist group called the Awami League won the elections in East Pakistan. Leaders of both West and East Pakistan sat to negotiate, however they did not make any agreements. Consequently, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, one of the high ranking people in the Awami League, declared an independent nation known as the People's Republic Bangladesh on 26 March 1971. Unsurprisingly, the west did not like this and guerilla warfare ensued. Ultimately, Bangladesh was able to defeat Pakistan with the help of the USSR and India, putting the war to an end on 16 December 1971.<sup>19</sup>

Many of this decolonization's impacts are still very much clear today. Animosity is still strong between India and Pakistan. Indian passport holders are not allowed to obtain tourist visas to visit Pakistan, and other methods of entry are highly regulated and restricted.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Pakistanis have to

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/when-did-bangladesh-become-a-country.html>

<sup>20</sup> <https://dgip.gov.pk/visa/indians.php>

apply for certain visas with legitimate reasons to enter India and cannot get tourist visas.<sup>21</sup> Throughout the years, India and Pakistan have tried to sit down and have peaceful talks, however many of these talks were cancelled. An example is in 2014, when India's newly elected (at the time) prime minister Narendra Modi invited the Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif in hopes of peaceful negotiations, however this was cancelled because Pakistan's high commissioner had met with Kashmiri separatists.<sup>22</sup>

On the topic of Kashmir, that brings us to our second case study.

## Case Study II: Jammu and Kashmir

As mentioned previously, Jammu and Kashmir was not among any of the territories that were granted to either Pakistan or India during the partition of India. Jammu and Kashmir was one of many princely states that, due to a very hasty agreement of the partition, were allowed to join either India or Pakistan, or even remain independent.<sup>23</sup> At the time, Jammu and Kashmir was governed by Hari Singh, who preferred independence for Kashmir rather than joining either Pakistan or India. To avert pressure from either nation, he signed a standstill agreement with Pakistan, allowing citizens of Kashmir to continue free trade and movement between the states. No such agreement was signed with India. As aforementioned violence ensued between Pakistan and India in 1947, Kashmir had pro-Pakistani rebels take over most of west Kashmir, and Pashtun tribesmen invaded Kashmir from Pakistan. Kashmir then requested backup from India to defend against the invasion, but India would only agree if Kashmir agreed to accede to India. Singh agreed and Kashmir was given special status in India, where it would have its own control over everything except for communication, foreign affairs, and defence.



Figure 1.4: Map of divided Kashmir

<sup>21</sup> <https://blog.wego.com/pakistan-to-india/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-between-india-and-pakistan>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/kashmir-conflict-how-did-it-start>

When war broke out over Kashmir, India turned to the United Nations asking for intervention. The United Nations recommended holding a referendum to decide whether or not the state should join India or Pakistan. This, however, never ended up happening because India and Pakistan could not agree to a demilitarization in the region before the referendum was to be held. Finally, in July of 1949, India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire line as per the recommendations of the United Nations and the region was divided between them. Another war broke out in 1965, with a smaller fight in 1999. The war in 1965 killed thousands, including many Kashmiri citizens, yet did not change the status of Kashmir between India and Pakistan nor the territory lines. Today, India and Pakistan both claim Kashmir in full, however only parts are recognized internationally to be “Indian administered” and “Pakistani administered”. Part of the area, namely Ladakh, is disputed between India and China as well. Figure 1.4 depicts a map of Kashmir and which nation controls what part.<sup>24</sup>

Kashmir is the perfect example of where decolonization failed to meet the needs of the people. Kashmir in a nutshell is two very powerful governments fighting over land, not caring about the people living on it. India did try to rectify the issue that was people’s voices not being heard by holding elections in Kashmir every 5 to 7 years. This however, brought along even more problems of its own. In the 1980s, more and more Islamic parties were organized into the Muslim United Front (MUF), and the party was gaining increasing attention and support. However, in the 1987 Kashmir election, the MUF won only in 4 of 43 electoral constituencies, despite having roughly 31% of the vote share. It was believed among many that the already ruling party, the National Conference, who was allied with the Indian National Congress, had rigged the election. This was also confirmed, according to the BBC, by the leader of the Congress Party at the time, Khem Lata Wuhkloo, who said, “I remember that there was a massive rigging in 1987 elections. The losing candidates were declared winners. It shook the ordinary people's faith in the elections and the democratic process.” This, unsurprisingly, caused a lot of uproar against the government, and many took to the streets to protest the rigged elections. People felt denied the right to vote, and thousands went out to protest the occupation of India and advocated for independence. India did not take kindly to this, and met the protesters with harsh crackdown, leading to more violence.

More than 650 people were killed in 1990 due to clashes between troops and separatists. Kashmiri militias, such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, were recruiting Muslim youth to aid in the fight for independence and attack the Indian military. The death toll rose more and more each following year. This of course, caught Pakistan’s attention, who introduced radical Islamic fighters into the conflict to fight for a pro-Pakistan Kashmir. India responded with a deployment of 500 000 troops into Kashmir, who cracked down on militants and protesters alike. Unarmed civilians who

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/10537286>

found themselves between the conflict were forced to flee and many were killed. India was firing bullets and pellets at civilians, blinding many and injuring many more. Over the years, Pakistan's militant groups also started going into India. In 2001, India's parliament building in New Delhi was bombed, causing 14 deaths. In 2008, militants from the same group killed 174 people and wounded more than 300 in Mumbai. In some ways, the whole conflict can be described as a cycle of violence, with the people of Kashmir suffering the most. India's harsh crackdowns lead to Kashmiris joining Pakistan's militants, who in turn attack India and cause more crackdowns.

Great Britain's hurry to get out of India amid already existing tensions between different groups has caused a lot of suffering for many, with different governments and radical groups at each other's throats. Kashmir is not the only example of this (another one of which will be touched upon further in this background guide), and this goes to show the effect of lackluster decolonization standards on the welfare and stability of newly born nations/states and their people. At the end of the day, the welfare and rights of the people living on the land should come first, however this was neglected by Pakistan, India, and Great Britain.

Kashmir's population has been divided more and more throughout the times. Many are pro-India, many are pro-Pakistan, and many are pro-independence. Calls for referendums have been made by the people many times, however neither India nor Pakistan were willing to give the opportunity for the people to decide.

### **Case Study III: Democratic Republic of the Congo**

#### Background History

Disclaimer: Any mention of "Congo" in this section refers to the modern Democratic Republic of Congo, whose capital is Kinshasa, unless otherwise specified.

Not unlike most other current nations, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (not to be confused with the Republic of Congo) was a very big European colony back in the day. As previously mentioned, the late 1800s saw King Leopold II of Belgium declaring to the rest of Europe that the Congo belonged to him and thus created the Congo Free State, under the guise ending slavery and bringing religion and modern life to the Congolese.<sup>25</sup> <sup>26</sup>What the Congo Free State really was was a place

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<https://www.britannica.com/place/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo/Belgian-paternalism-and-the-politics-of-decolonization>

<sup>26</sup>

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Belgian-Congo>

where Leopold could exploit the population and the land for his own gain. Leopold employed a system that would enable him to extract as much natural resources as possible from the land by forcing as much labour out of the local people as possible. Natural resources of interest included wild rubber, palm oil, and ivory. Many inhumane tactics were used to incentivize (i.e. force) the locals to do labour for him. Families of Congolese men were kidnapped as a threat for the men to work. Any rebels saw their villages burnt and families slaughtered by the Force Publique, Leopold's private army consisting of European led African troops. Force Publique did unspeakable things to the people, such as cutting the hands off of those who did not comply, including children. This served not only as punishment, but an act to terrorize the people into submission. Soldiers would also use this as a way to prove that they were actively "doing their duty" to silence rebels. It is believed that the population of the state declined from twenty million to only eight million. When foreign nations caught on to the atrocities occurring in the Congo Free State, Leopold faced a lot of criticism, and eventually the Belgian parliament wished to purchase the Congo and place it under Belgian rule, rather than just King Leopold. In 1908, the Congo Free State was abolished with Belgian Congo as its replacement. Figure 1.5 shows a map of the Belgian Congo.



Figure 1.5: Belgian Congo

The Belgian parliament had a very different approach to how the Congo would be governed. They opted for paternalism, which in short means that the government took a more "fatherly" approach and the people did not have much responsibility in government. Traditional rulers were used as agents to collect taxes and recruit labour and those who were not so cooperative were deposed. After World War I, many private European and American companies invested heavily in the Belgian Congo. Large plantations, livestock farms, and many mines were developed. Africans worked on four to seven-year contracts in the mines and plantations. A lot of infrastructure however was built from forced labour, like roads and railroads.

Resistance did not fade away once the Congo Free State was abolished. The Belgian Congo saw a lot of African resistance throughout its lifetime as well. Rebellions were very prevalent among the

eastern regions of the Congo in 1919, and were suppressed in 1923. Alongside that, there were also religious groups that were extremely anti-European, such as the Kimbanguist Church, whose founder Simon Kimbangu was arrested and charged with insurrection by Belgian authorities and was sentenced to life in prison.<sup>27</sup> Throughout the depression years and World War II, unrest was always prevalent in the nation.

In 1956, the publication of a political manifesto which called for immediate independence caused a lot of political awakening for the Congolese. In 1958, the Congo National Movement, the first nationwide Congolese political party, was launched. In January of the year after, riots broke out in Leopoldville (modern day Kinshasa) calling for an independent Congo state. On 13 January 1959, the Belgian government formally recognized that independence was the eventual target for the Belgian Congo, however with no rush. This agitated many nationalists, which then led to a Round Table Conference in Brussels in January of 1960, where nationalist organizations were invited, to discuss and work out any details surrounding the transfer of power. What ended up actually happening was Congo would become an experiment for instant decolonization. On the 30th of June that same year, Belgium ceased control and the Republic of Congo (whose capital was Leopoldville and who would later be renamed to the Democratic Republic of Congo) was formed (not to be confused with the other Republic of Congo, whose capital is Brazzaville).

As you may have guessed due to the DRC's inclusion in our background guide, a lot of chaos followed.<sup>28</sup> While the Congo now received its long-awaited independence, many things were not meant to change so soon. Many European people stayed in power in places like the Force Publique, as well as the fact that the Congo was lacking Congolese with higher education, so European technicians still stayed in place. This caused a lot of unrest. A few days after the new republic was formed, Congolese soldiers of Force Publique mutinied because the commander, Lieutenant General Emile Janssens disallowed many Congolese soldiers promotions and salary increases, as well as many from even joining the force. As this violence became widespread around the nation, targeting European Belgian officers in particular, the Belgium government deployed its own troops to help defend and restore peace, while also evacuating Belgian citizens. Over 850 000 Belgians were evacuated. This marked not the end of the Congo Crisis, but only the beginning.<sup>29</sup>

On 11 July 1960, the Congo's richest province, the southern Katanga province, declared itself independent under the leadership of Moïse Tshombe, who was pro-Belgium. The Congolese

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kimbanguist-Church>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.worldhistoryedu.com/congo-crisis-of-1960-1965-history-causes-effects/>

<sup>29</sup>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2020/6/30/in-pictures-from-1960-to-2020-drcs-post-independence-history/>

government turns to the United Nations in request of security assistance to help kick out the Belgian soldiers. The United Nations voted to send troops, however they were not allowed to interfere initially. Roughly 20 000 troops were sent. The independence movement eventually was suppressed in 1963. Figure 1.6 depicts a photograph of the UN chief Dag Hammarskjold and Tshombe in front of



Figure 1.6: UN Chief Dag Hammarskjold on the right with Moise Tshombe in the centre.

the Katanga flag. Meanwhile, things were happening within the Congo's government too. In September of 1960, Congo had its first national elections. The Congolese National Movement (MNC) led by Patrice Lumumba won the popular vote, outpolling the Alliance des Bakongo (ABAKO), led by Joseph Kasa-Vubu, however neither side were able to form a parliamentary coalition. This led to a compromise agreement between the two. Kasa-Vubu would be president and Lumumba would be prime minister. This led to discord, and both the president and prime minister dismissed each other and/or relieved each other of their duties, leading to a dispute over the control of the central government.

On 14 September 1960, army Chief of Staff Joseph Mobutu took power over the nation in a coup d'etat, and announced his rule with the help of a caretaker government. The new regime was able to capture and execute Lumumba in later years. On 2 August 1961, Cyrille Adoula, head of a civilian government, came to power. Because of his inability to deal with the Katanga secession and dissolution of the parliament, he lost popularity. The Katanga secession was also defeated eventually

in 1963. Another secession attempt started in 1964, where the pro-Lumumba government in Stanleyville declared the east of Congo to be independent under the “People’s Republic of the Congo”, which got defeated in the following year. Due to Adoula’s unpopularity, there were rural insurgent groups that went against the government yet again. European mercenaries helped regain control of territories claimed by these insurgents. Ironically, Adoula was eventually replaced by Tshombe, the one who led the Katanga secession. At this point, Kasa-Vubu was still president and Tshombe was the prime minister. In 1964, the country was officially named the “Democratic Republic of the Congo”.

Mobutu led another coup d’etat in 1965. This time, Kasa-Vubu and Tshombe were both dismissed, and Mobutu himself took the title of president. Tshombe was able to escape the nation and was determined to gain power again. Multiple mutinies happened in Tshombe’s name, one of which was triggered due to one of his planes being hijacked which eventually led to his death, after being held prisoner.

The DRC finally saw some political stability for a few years, where Mobutu attempted, unsuccessfully, to improve the economic state of the DRC. The DRC was renamed to “Zaire” in 1971. Zaire’s main opposition, the Congolese National Liberation Front, which operated from Angola, launched two invasions into Shaba (Katanga), which were taken care of by external governments, namely Morocco and France, at the cost of many African and European lives.

In 1993-94, during the Rwandan crisis & genocide, Mobutu backed the Hutu led Rwandan government, which was also supported by France and Belgium. This mended his relationship with western powers, including the USA. This however, also caused decreased popularity of him within his citizens. He encouraged attacks against Rwandan Tutsis in Zaire. This and his support of an exiled from Rwanda Hutu faction ultimately led to local Tutsi and the Rwandan government to team up to Mobutu’s opponent Laurent Kabila and his Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire. They also had the support of Angola and Uganda because Mobutu supported rebellions in those nations. Unsurprisingly, this led to another conflict and struggle for power, leading to Mobutu’s exile and eventual death.

At this point, Kabila renamed Zaire back to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He was able to get foreign aid and relief to the country’s economy. He was very harsh against demonstrations, especially those against him, and was accused of human rights’ violations. Rebellions were as present as ever and a five year long civil war began in 1998. The Ugandan and Rwandan governments backed the rebels while the Angolan, Namibian, and Zimbabwean governments backed Kabila. A cease-fire and deployments of UN peacekeeping troops were in order after the 1999 Lusaka Peace accord, however

fighting did not stop. Kabila was eventually assassinated in 2001 and succeeded by his son, Joseph Kabila. The Rwandan and Ugandan governments agreed to pull out of the DRC according to the UN's pull-out plan, which in the end was not realized.

Throughout all the chaos, the DRC was devastated. Over three million people were killed, and even more suffered from homelessness, starvation, and disease. From the early 2000s to now, there have been even more conflicts causing the UN to have to intervene. I encourage all delegates to look further into this issue as it would be beneficial to build background knowledge. Overall, it is needless to say that the DRC is one of the most violent nations when it comes to political and power struggle.

Figure 1.7 shows the different nations' violence around the world over politics.

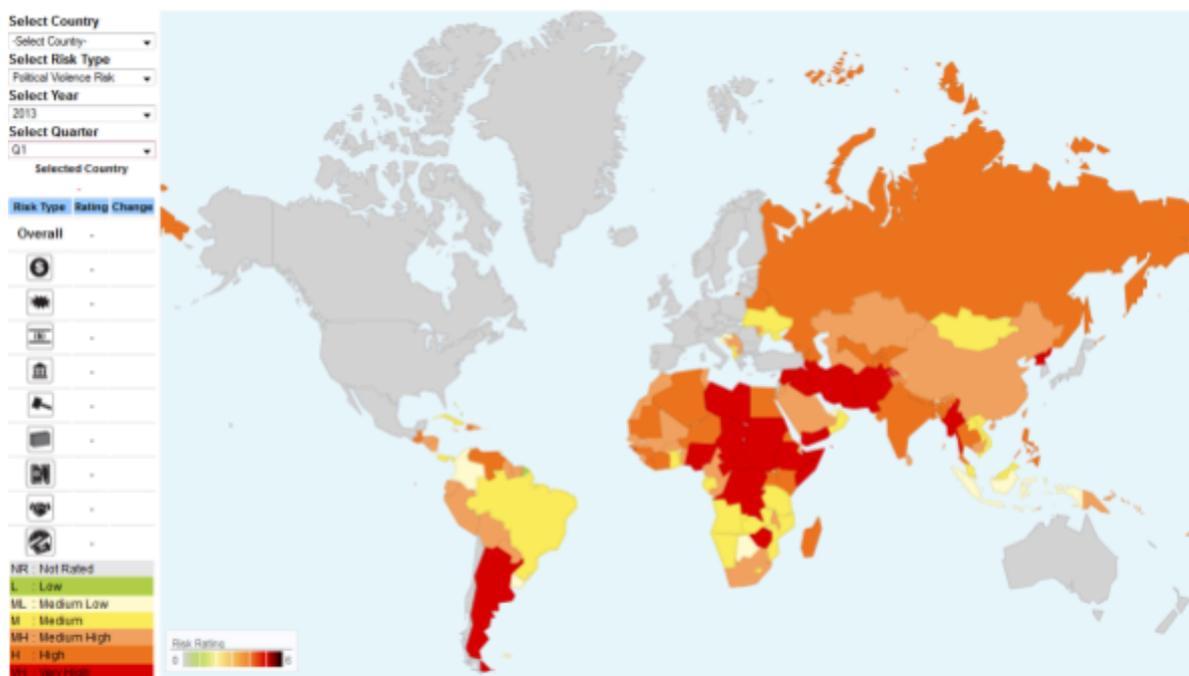


Figure 1.7: Risk of political violence. The DRC is marked as very high.

## Already Existing Documents/Declarations on Decolonization

Since the 26th session (1971-1972), the UN has put out the “Dissemination of information on decolonization” in each General Assembly session. The sessions can all be found [here](#). The dissemination of information's primary focus is to work on information relating to decolonization. The most recent one (as of writing), the 77th session, talks a lot about improving the information relating to decolonization and giving it as much publicity as possible, including web-based information on assistance programmes available to non-self-governing territories.

On 14 December 1960, in the General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was published.<sup>30</sup> It states that all peoples have the right to self-determination. Another clause states that immediate steps should be taken in the transfer of all powers to the peoples of Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories or all other territories which have not yet attained independence. Furthermore, inadequacy of political, economic, social, or educational preparedness should not serve as a reason for delaying any territory's independence.

### International Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism

From 1990-2000, and every decade onwards until (but including) 2021-2030. Each decade saw a plan of action regarding decolonization for that decade. The resolutions themselves can be found [here](#).

The First International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (1990 - 2000) highlights the roles of different actors in eradicating colonialism. In specific, the roles of the international community; priority action by the United Nations in cooperation with the administering Powers; priority actions required of the administering Powers; measures which should be taken by Member States at the national level; the role of specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations; and action to be taken by the Special Committee on the situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Special Committee on Decolonization or C-24, who reports to SPECPOL).

The Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2001 - 2010) reiterated the plan from the previous decade as well as updated. The specifics can be found within the resolutions. The third (2011 - 2020) and fourth (2021 - 2030) were all more or less the same story.<sup>31</sup>

### **Things to Consider**

A very important factor when coming up with your resolutions is whether or not your country was historically a colonizer or once a colony. Generally speaking, former colonies will want, for the most part, the right to self determination and governance, but their relationships with their former colonizers may vary. It is important to look into the history of your own nation's decolonization, especially information about: how they gained independence (through a referendum? A war?) and how well received it was by the colonizer, what events occurred after the decolonization (did it cause

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<sup>30</sup>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-granting-independence-colonial-countries-and-peoples>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/history/international-decades>

any mass displacements? war?), how borders were decided, and any other relevant information to how your nation is today. Remember, in committee, you want to represent your nation's best interests, and so looking into its history will give you a clue into how this committee can be able to help mitigate the negative consequences and effects to your nation that arise as a result of decolonization. Colonizer nations will likely have different standpoints. Historically, many colonizers exploited colonies in different ways such as taking advantage of wealth, enforcing slave labour, cultural suppression, etc. It is important to note that while many of the former colonizers have since then acknowledged the atrocities committed in the past, many have not issued any formal apology and do not wish to be responsible for the bettering of their former colonies. That being said, each colonizer does have its own interests surrounding modern decolonization, considerably more so for those that still own colonies, and it is important to research more about that.

### **Committee Objectives**

Remember, decolonization is an issue that every country has been related to at some point in time. The goal of this committee is to be able to diminish as much as possible the amount of uncertainty and chaos that can arise and has arisen from previous cases of decolonization. While SPECPOL is very closely tied with many current colonies, we do not wish to solve any single case of decolonization at TMUN, but rather address the root issue causing all of the turmoil. It is important for the committee to address the past issues faced by decolonization, and come up with solutions that would help reduce them. Your resolutions should focus on defining guidelines for decolonization, and be able to address the different problems such as disputes, human displacement, local economies, human rights, etc.

### **Guiding Questions**

1. Can any colony be readily decolonized at any point in time? (i.e. do certain conditions need to be met for there to be a safe decolonization process)
2. How can we prevent current colonies from suffering the same fate of many already decolonized states?
3. Who should be given the decision for the fate of the soon-to-be decolonized state?
4. How can we ensure peace and security when a colony's new fate is to be decided?
5. How can we deal with and/or prevent any disputes, whether it is territorial, political etc?
6. Whose responsibility is it to ensure that the citizens are able to live well and prosper after any changes to a territory?
7. Who should take accountability for failed decolonization?

8. How can we ensure that decolonization is not rushed and that all parties involved are involved until the nation is stable?
9. How can we ensure that human rights are preserved during and after the process of decolonization?
10. How big of an impact has decolonization left on your nation even to this day?
11. Were there any common themes between the case studies? Anything similar to the history of your nation?

### **Conclusion & Further Research**

With that, I thank everybody for reading the entire first topic. A tip I have for all delegates is to look into your own nation's decolonization history, as well as the decolonization history of surrounding nations and allies. As every nation has been involved with decolonization at some point, it would play a very big role in developing your nation's stance. As a reminder, the 3 case studies that were shown in this background guide are not the topic itself, but rather examples of why this topic is important. Your resolutions should focus on decolonization as a whole, and not any of the specific cases. Also remember, this topic faces many challenges due to the variety of differences in terms of people, governmental structures, cultures, and other factors, and it is important that you get a good understanding of different places. I highly recommend all delegates to look further into examples of failed decolonization, as well as examples of relatively successful decolonization, for example Singapore. SPECPOL annually raises questions of the state of each remaining colony, and it is important to take that into consideration when you draft your resolutions. Also, this is a reminder that this is not a crisis committee, so your solutions must be peaceful and make sense, as opposed to folly such as advocating for the invasion and annexation of territories and any related actions. This committee is meant to provide a framework towards dealing with these issues, and should have all of the world kept in mind.

## Topic B: Refugees of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

### Background of the Conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is probably one of the biggest and pressing modern day conflicts that has been in place since the 20th century. As this topic is focused more on the refugees that have arisen from this conflict, this background guide will not go too deep into the history of the conflict. I encourage all delegates to look into the history on their own time.<sup>32</sup>

Between 1920 and 1948, as a direct result of the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, who controlled modern day Israel and Palestine, Palestine (as it was known then) was handed to and controlled by the United Kingdom, under what was known as the [British Mandate for Palestine](#). This was approved by the League of Nations in 1922.

In 1947, the United Nations sought to divide the British Mandate into Arab and Jewish states, in part due to an influx of the Jewish population in the region, many who moved due to the risk of facing persecution in many places in Europe. Figure 2.1 below shows a graph of Jewish immigration to Palestine.

They adopted [Resolution 181](#) which would divide the land with the borders shown in Figure 2.2. Palestine would retain the

West Bank and Gaza strip, and the state of Israel would receive the rest. Jerusalem was to be a special international zone, due to hosting many different religious heritage sites for Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike.<sup>33</sup>

In 1948, after the formation of the State of Israel, the first Arab-Israeli war began.<sup>34</sup> Israel won this war in 1949, and over 750 000 Palestinians were displaced. The territory was divided into 3 sections: the State of Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip (not much different from today, however border locations were different). As to be expected, tensions rose in the region. Due to rising tensions



Figure 2.2: The borders defined by the partition plan

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/israeli-palestinian-conflict>

<sup>33</sup>

<https://theconversation.com/palestine-and-britain-forgotten-legacy-of-world-war-i-that-devastated-the-middle-east-106408>

<sup>34</sup>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2020/6/26/palestine-and-israel-mapping-an-annexation#oldcity>

between Egypt + Syria + Jordan and Israel, a small six day long war broke out between them in 1967 leading to Israel gaining control over the Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, and the West Bank. Conflict between Egypt and Israel finally ended after the Camp David accords were signed. The question of

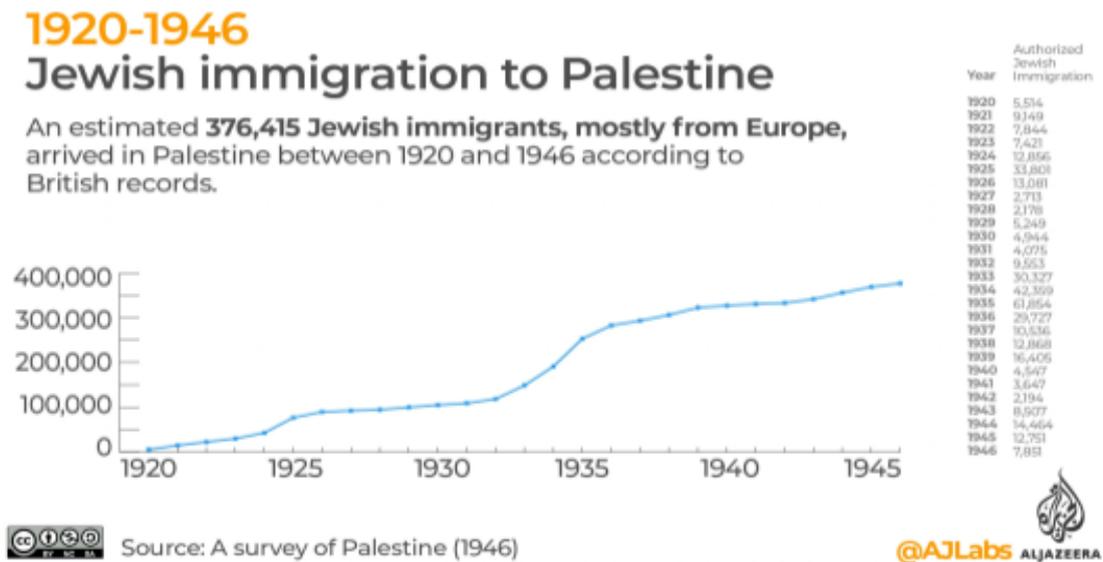


Figure 2.1: Graph from Al Jazeera depicting Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Palestinian self determination became more and more pressing as time passed on. In 1987, the first intifada happened as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The 1993 Oslo I Accords resolved this by setting up a framework to allow Palestinians self-governance in the Gaza Strip and West Bank while also establishing mutual recognition between Palestine and Israel. The 1995 Oslo II Accords ensured that Israel would have to withdraw from 6 cities and 450 towns in the West Bank.

In 2000, Palestinians launched the second intifada, which lasted until 2005. Israel responded by approving the construction of a wall around the West Bank. Conflict arose in Gaza in the 2010s between Israel and Hamas, one of two main political parties in Palestine. A ceasefire ended up stopping the fighting, but not

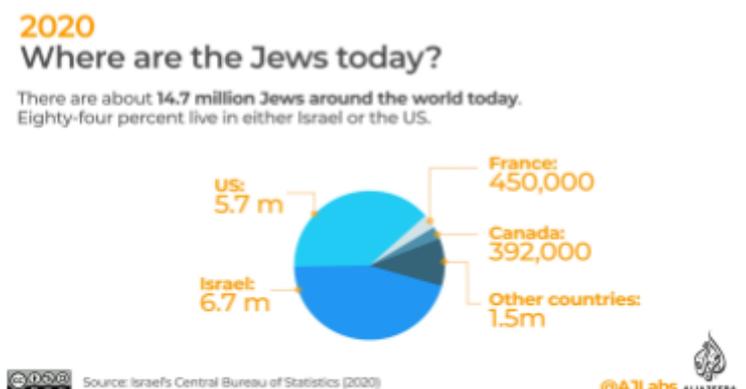
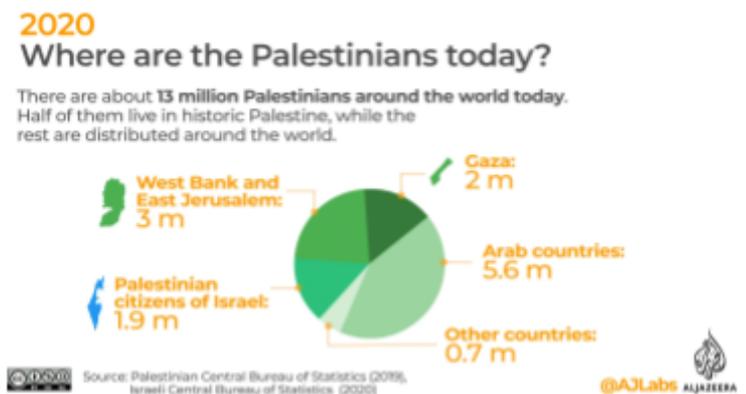


Figure 2.3: Pie charts showing where Palestinians and Jews are located as of 2020.

before hundreds of Israelis and thousands of Palestinians were killed. Throughout the decade, protests occurred in Gaza, and Jerusalem, and many weaponized threats and demonstrations also occurred. By 2021, over 72 000 Palestinians were displaced as a result of fighting. Figure 2.3 depicts the distribution of Palestinians and Jews across the world.

This brings us to today, where the future of Israel and Palestine is still unclear. While that on its own is an extremely important topic, which I highly encourage delegates to look further into, it is not the main goal of this committee. This committee seeks to aid the all too many refugees that have been created from this crisis. With that, this guide will be focused more so on developments relating to the refugees of this conflict.

### **The Problem**

Many refugees have arisen as a result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These refugees often find themselves in barely liveable conditions. Lack of electricity, water, food, and safety plague the lives of millions. Many face inadequate legal status to be able to work and live normal lives. Despite the countless amount of effort put towards alleviating the crisis, it simply is not enough. Many are still dying and without an end to the conflict in sight, many more will suffer and die if not enough is done. The lives of millions are on the line, and delegates must come together and come up with a resolution to this conflict that will hopefully put the suffering of millions in the past.

### **UNRWA**

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) is a body that reports to the General Assembly through the Fourth Committee (i.e. SPECPOL). It was established by the [United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302 \(IV\) of 8 December 1949](#), and would carry out direct relief programmes to Palestinian refugees. Due to the absence of a real solution to the Palestinian refugee crisis, UNRWA's mandate has been renewed repeatedly, most recently (as of writing) to June 2023. UNRWA helps anyone registered as a Palestinian Refugee (defined as "persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 War."). Descendants of such males, including legally adopted children are also eligible to be registered. In 1950, when UNRWA first began operations, around 750 000 refugees' needs were under UNRWA's response. Now, nearly 6 million are eligible for UNRWA's aid. <sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are>

In terms of registered refugees, roughly  $\frac{1}{3}$  of them (i.e. 1.5 million) live across 58 recognized Palestine refugee camps in both Palestine and surrounding nations. These include Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, as well as the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including Eastern Jerusalem. These camps are defined to be plots of land that are placed by host governments at the disposal of UNRWA with the purpose of setting up and hosting facilities to house and provide for refugees. On top of recognized camps, UNRWA also helps to maintain schools, health centres, and distribution centres aside from those in camps. Refugees do not own the land that their camps are situated on, but have the right to use the land for residential purposes. These camps are poor, dense in population, and many lack basic infrastructure like roads or sewers.

The remaining  $\frac{2}{3}$  of them live in regular cities and towns of host countries + Palestine (i.e. the Gaza Strip and the West Bank). The UNRWA provides services to those outside of registered camps as well. Figure 2.4 shows the distribution of registered Palestine Refugees as of 2018.

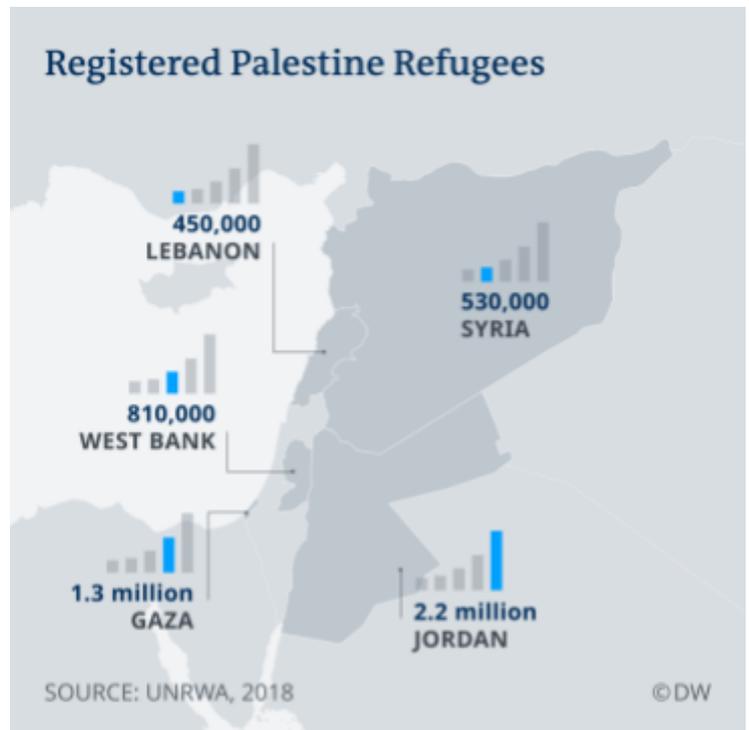


Figure 2.4: Registered Palestinian Refugees

### Syria



Figure 2.5: Syrian Palestine Refugees

On top of the struggles of being Palestine refugees, the 438 000 refugees still living in Syria have also had to endure the Syrian civil war since 2011. The UNRWA has had to ensure that their needs are met. At least 60% of Palestine refugees in Syria have been displaced once or more. Those in Syria are also suffering from extreme poverty, despite the UNRWA's efforts in providing cash assistance. 82% are living on less than \$2 USD per day. UNRWA also provided food aid, handing out food baskets to nearly 350 000 refugees in Syria in June 2022. Over 102 schools are also operated by the agency to help educate the young. The Syrian conflict has affected much of UNRWA's efforts to help the refugees. 2 of the refugee camps in Syria have been made inaccessible due to the conflict, 40% of classrooms have been lost, and 25% of the agency's health centres are also out of order. Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, over 120

000 Syrian Palestine refugees have left to other countries. Statistics for Syria are shown in figure 2.5.<sup>36</sup>

### Lebanon

Lebanon has roughly 490 000 Palestine refugees. Roughly 31 000 of those are from Syria. Roughly 45% of refugees live in registered camps in Lebanon and 200 000 utilize their services every year. There are 12 registered camps in Lebanon. The poverty rate in Lebanon is not too great either, with 80% being below the national poverty line. Many struggle to pay for hospitalization, despite the UNRWA’s attempts to aid. Many have also been denied the right to work and are also denied the owning of immovable property. This leaves many unable to generate and accumulate wealth through ownership and inheritance. There is also a lot of violence and a lack of control over that. Statistics for Lebanon are shown in figure 2.6.



Figure 2.6: Lebanese Palestine Refugees

### Jordan



Figure 2.7: Jordanian Palestine Refugees

Jordan has the largest population of registered refugees, with over two million, accounting for around 40% of all registered refugees. Most of them have full citizenship and 18% of them live in registered camps. Much like Lebanon, Jordan is the current home of many who fled Syria due to the conflict there. Many of those refugees live in extreme poverty and unstable legal statuses. Many refugees born in Jordan are not granted Jordanian citizenship, but rather are recognized as Palestinian. As a result, they cannot vote, pay a lot more for passport and driver’s licence fees, and must go through extra security processes before buying apartments. In early 2023, Jordan hosted a meeting between Israeli and Palestinian officials in an attempt to halt a surge of deadly violence in the West Bank. Jordan’s King Abdullah stressed the need to maintain calm and cease all acts of violence and reaffirmed its support for a two-state solution. When the West Bank was put under Jordanian control in 1950, the residents of the West Bank were granted Jordanian citizenships, while those in the Gaza Strip were not. After Jordan’s cutting of administrative ties in the West Bank in 1988, those originally from the West Bank living in Jordan’s pre-1950 lands maintained

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/syria>

full citizenship rights, while the people from the Gaza Strip were considered foreigners. Statistics for Jordan are shown in figure 2.7.

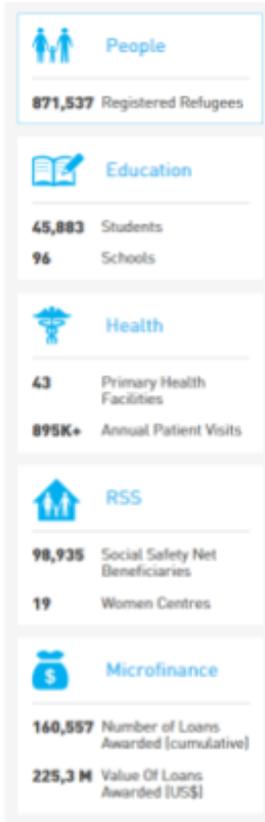


Figure 2.8: West Bank Palestine Refugees

### West Bank

The West Bank, as mentioned earlier, consisted originally of practically only Palestinians, until Israel gained control of it from Jordan after the six-day war in 1967. As the name implies, it is located on the West Bank of the Jordan River. As time progressed, more and more Israeli Jews found themselves moving to the West Bank, mostly into communities separate from the already situated millions of Palestinians. Today, of its three million people, ~432 000 of them are Israeli settlers. It is widely accepted globally that Israeli settlers violate international law. The 1949 Geneva Convention prohibits moving civilians into occupied states, which Israel signed. The West Bank is considered by Israel to be disputed territory. As for registered Palestine refugees, more than 871 000 live in the West Bank. The West Bank houses the most camps out of all of the territories that UNRWA works in, with 19 refugee camps. To read more about the West Bank’s camps, you can visit [UNRWA West Bank Atlas 2021](#). To summarize, many lack proper infrastructure for healthcare, sewage, schools, and other public needs, not unlike those in other territories as well. Statistics for the West Bank are shown in figure 2.8.<sup>37</sup>

### Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip has a population of 2.1 million, 1.7 million of which are registered refugees. For the last decade and a half, their socioeconomic status has been in steady decline. In response to Hamas taking over the Gaza Strip, Israel had imposed a blockade in 2007. This heavily restricted movement in and out of the Gaza Strip, including access to markets.

Furthermore, food insecurity affects roughly 63% of people in the Gaza Strip, which begs the need for international assistance. There was an 81.5% poverty rate and an unemployment rate of 46.6% by the end of Q3 2022, with a 62.3% unemployment rate among those aged 15 to 29. Access to basic resources including water and electricity are also notably constrained, with only roughly 5% of people having access to clean water. Electricity is available for up to 11 hours per day, but even then, power outages are far too common, and greatly affect the people’s access to essential services.

<sup>37</sup> <https://theconversation.com/israels-west-bank-settlements-4-questions-answered-127560>



Figure 2.9: Gaza Strip Palestine Refugees

In terms of registered refugee camps, Gaza Strip houses 8 of them, with some of the highest population densities in the world. Over 13 000 staff and 300 installations are in place to help deliver education, healthcare, relief, and emergency assistance to the registered refugees in need in the Gaza Strip.

To make things worse, in 2014, violence erupted in the Gaza Strip with Israeli aerial and navy bombardment versus Palestinian rocket fire. This led to a humanitarian emergency being declared in the Gaza Strip. This travesty led to massive loss of life, destruction, and displacement. While fruitful efforts to recover the Gaza Strip were made, the psychological impact on the people of Gaza cannot be understated. Hostilities constantly erupt from time to time, leading to more unwanted death and destruction. Many children find themselves caught in the middle of the fighting. Statistics for the Gaza Strip are shown in figure 2.9.

### Current Challenges Faced

A very big challenge faced by all of the refugee camps across the different states/regions is the lack of proper resources and infrastructure to accommodate everybody. A lot of this is in part due to violence. Many facilities, such as healthcare or education, get destroyed due to escalating violence, whether it is a national crisis or other conflicts, leading to refugees with very limited access to basic needs. Schools are seeing roughly 50 students per teacher.

When medical consultants were made, each patient on average spent 3 minutes with their doctor. This is a very low amount of time for a health checkup. Moreover, many refugees also find themselves in a grey area in terms of legal status. As a result, many lack the ability to generate income in many ways, and this can also lead to psychological issues, such as a faltering sense of self-identity.



Figure 2.10: Palestinian children in sub-par living conditions.

The most widespread problem by far across the different regions is poverty. It got to the point where in January 2023, the refugees were described to have hit rock bottom. “I thought that they had reached rock bottom some time ago, but I discover each time that this misery people are confronted with is getting worse and worse,” the UNRWA Commissioner-General said<sup>3839</sup>. It is said that in Syria, Gaza, and Lebanon, 90% of the refugees live below the poverty line. Over a million in Gaza were dependent on food assistance. This led to the UNRWA appealing for roughly \$1.6 billion to fund core operations in 2023. The \$1.6 billion appeal specifies \$848 million for core services including health, education, relief, social services, and protection, with another \$781.6 million on emergency operations in occupied Palestinian territory (i.e. Gaza and West Bank), Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. The Palestinian economy is also hindered by restrictions imposed by Israel on trade and movement. From 2017 to 2019, the annual GDP growth was on average 1.3%, according to the World Bank. This was smaller than its population growth, thus decreasing the GDP per capita. Tensions between Israel and Palestine, COVID-19, and even external tensions such as Russo-Ukraine have all played a role in sabotaging the welfare of Palestinians. Figure 2.10 shows the conditions imposed onto the Palestinians due to their poverty.

Needless to say, another core issue is the shortage of funding to the UNRWA. The UNRWA faces political attacks too, which leads to some being turned off from donating. UNRWA even faced criticism by the United States in 2018, who claimed that UNRWA was not serving Palestinians and claimed that the number of refugees claimed by them was false. They cut off all funding to UNRWA, effectively cutting its budget by a third, something no president in the United States had ever done before. In April of 2021, the United States announced that they would contribute \$150 million USD to the UNRWA, restoring its support for the agency. In 2020, UNRWA found itself so short of money that it was unable to pay 28 000 of its workers’ salaries.<sup>40</sup>

### Living Conditions of the Refugee Camps

The living conditions of the Palestine refugee camps are, without a doubt, not up to par. They were all built with a certain capacity of people in mind, however high volumes of refugees have overcrowded these camps. Take the Burj Barajneh Camp in Lebanon for example. It covers an area of roughly 1 square kilometre and is supposed to fit 10 000 people. With an initial population of 3500 people, its population rapidly grew, boosted even more due to the Syrian civil war, to now, where it has over four

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<sup>38</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/01/1132777>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/publication/economic-update-april-2022>

<sup>40</sup>

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/in-one-move-trump-eliminated-us-funding-for-unrwa-and-the-us-role-as-mideast-peacemaker/>



Figure 2.11: Burj Barajneh Camp. A lot of electric cables and very narrow street.

times as many people as its capacity. Furthermore, a portion of it was destroyed in the 1982 Israeli invasion as well as the Lebanese civil war. Because of its influx in people, more building had to be done without room for increasing foundations, leading to much narrower roads and putting stress on infrastructure. There are also many safety hazards in this camp alone, for example exposed electric wires that have electrocuted dozens. Figure 2.11 depicts the

Burj Barajneh camp. Burj Barajneh is just one of many camps that face issues surrounding living conditions.

### Conflicts in Camps

The refugee camps are not short of fighting. In Lebanon, the largest UNRWA camp is the Ein el-Hilweh camp, which was established in 1948. Its location is near the southern city of Sidon and falls outside of the jurisdiction of the Lebanese security forces. As such, it is the responsibility of rival factions to ensure security. This led to conflict. In July 2023, violence erupted, leading to the death of an Islamist. A day after the initial death, tensions kept rising, leading to the death of Ashraf al-Armouchi, a Fatah commander, alongside several of his aides. A ceasefire was agreed upon, however it did not last long, as heavy violence with gun and anti-tank weaponry was reported the day after. Over 40 people were injured and two schools were damaged. A second ceasefire was agreed upon, and it mostly calmed the situation, with little reports for gunfire afterwards. 9 Lebanese soldiers were killed and more were injured. This has caused the UNRWA to halt operations in the camp temporarily.<sup>41</sup>

Another camp to note is the Jenin camp in the West Bank. In 2002, it was occupied by the Israeli military following ten days of fighting. This led to the destruction of over 400 houses and damage of hundreds more, and roughly a quarter of the camp's population alone was displaced. Today, refugees living in Jenin are exposed to the threat of violence. With both Israeli and Palestinian armed forces and factions showing presence in Jenin, many have found themselves caught in between clashes. In 2022, the Israeli Security Forces (ISF) fatally shot 26 Palestinians, including children, and injured hundreds more. UNRWA facilities also sustained damage, such as health centres and schools. On top

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<sup>41</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-66354364>

of the violence, refugees in Jenin lack water, electricity, living space, lighting, and ventilation. UNRWA has been trying to construct more for the refugees but this has been hurt by lack of funding.

The Aqabat Jaber camp in Jericho in the West Bank also sees conflict between Israel and Palestine. In early 2023, Israeli forces raided the camp in a successful attempt to take out suspected attackers of a restaurant using assault weapons, during a period of rising tensions which threatened a third intifada.<sup>42</sup> Five Palestinians were killed. A senior Hamas official, Shaker Amara, was arrested. While searching for the suspected attackers, Israeli soldiers had put up many checkpoints, creating hours-long lines as they searched vehicles and identifications of everyone. Unsurprisingly, residents are not happy with this, condemning the Israeli action as collective punishment ,

### **The Positions of a Few Other Countries**

#### United States of America

Despite not recognizing Palestine as a state, the United States has pledged its support towards bettering the welfare of Palestinian people. The United States announced that it would provide up to \$100 million for the East Jerusalem Hospital Network, comprised of 6 hospitals in East Jerusalem providing specialized services including oncology, dialysis, neonatal intensive care, and specialized maternity, ophthalmology, and emergency services to patients from East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank. This funding is provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Moreover, the USA has also funded more than \$618 million to the UNRWA under the Biden administration alone, reestablishing the USA as UNRWA's largest donor. They also said they would provide \$15 million as humanitarian aid for vulnerable Palestinians. Through funding to the UN World Food Program, the USA is providing electronic food vouchers, multipurpose cash assistance, and emergency livelihoods support.<sup>43</sup>

#### Russian Federation

As a country that recognizes Palestine as a state, Russia has had its fair share of support of Palestine. Russia supported the Oslo Accords and voted in favour for Palestine's upgrade in status in 1998, a

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/02/06/israel-jericho-palestinians-west-bank/>

<sup>43</sup>

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/14/fact-sheet-the-united-states-palestinian-relationship/>

vote that Israel and the United States opposed.<sup>44</sup><sup>45</sup> During the Gaza War between 2008 and 2009, Russia condemned Israeli actions and provided 60 tons of aid, which includes tents, medicines, and foods, and even ordered for more aid on top of that to be sent. Russia has openly supported an independent Palestine with a capital in East Jerusalem.<sup>46</sup>

### United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Despite not recognizing Palestine as a state, the United Kingdom has pledged funding towards UNRWA consistently, being one of its bigger donors. In 2020, the United Kingdom's contribution of the year as of July was £33.5 million, equivalent to \$42.65 million. The United Kingdom continues to support a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, hoping that they are able to coexist peacefully with secure borders and a shared capital of Jerusalem.

### Arab Republic of Egypt

Many Palestinians fled to Egypt after the numerous wars between Israel and Palestine. Many Gazans living in and/or employed by Egypt as civil servants were unable to return to Gaza when it was occupied by Israel. These displaced Palestinians were neither protected by UNHCR nor UNRWA. Egypt did not allow UNRWA to operate on its territories. When Gamal Abdel-Nasser held power in 1952, Palestinians saw a golden age in Egypt, where they were treated as equals to Egyptians and had access to education and other state services without having to pay extra. This did not last forever, as rising tensions and the eventual assassination of Egypt's culture minister by the Palestinian faction had Egyptian laws amended to treat Palestinians as foreigners. This led to rights for education, employment, and residency rescinded.<sup>47</sup>

### Canada

Although Canada does not recognize the State of Palestine, they continue to provide aid to Palestine refugees. From 2019 to 2023, Canada has provided \$90 million to UNRWA. In mid-2023, Harjit S.

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<sup>44</sup>

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/quot-palestine-quot-status-upgraded-in-un-general-assembly-july-1998>

<sup>45</sup> <https://ria.ru/20090103/158559525.html>

<sup>46</sup>

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/vladimir-putin-says-russia-will-fight-for-the-right-of-palestinians-to-their-own-state-10141902.html&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1705788751187113&usq=AOvVaw3MH7ar5cxhsJ03kPoRSrn8>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.fmreview.org/sustainable-livelihoods/elabed>

Sajjan, Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, announced further support of up to \$100 million over the next 4 years in order to help fund basic education, health services, and social services. Canada also pledged \$3 million to the Emergency Appeal for the West Bank and Gaza to help ensure that people would be provided emergency food assistance, emergency health services, and improved water and sanitation access. Canada works closely with UNRWA and will continue to help provide aid.<sup>48</sup>

### People's Republic of China

Similar to Russia, China supports an independent Palestinian state defined by the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. In August of 2023, the People's Republic of China provided \$1 million to the UNRWA to help support its education program for 5300 Palestinian children across five schools in the Gaza Strip. From the Palestine News & Info Agency: The Head of the Office of the People's Republic of China to the State of Palestine, Ambassador Zeng Jixin, said, "For over 70 years, UNRWA has played an irreplaceable and vital role in alleviating the humanitarian plight of Palestinian Refugees by providing them with critical relief and protection. China fully recognizes and highly commends the work of UNRWA and has been providing assistance within our capacity to support UNRWA in fulfilling its mandate. This year, China contributed US\$ 1 million to UNRWA, which is a concrete measure to implement President Xi Jinping's three-point proposal for the settlement of the Palestinian question. China is ready to work with the international community and make positive contributions to the early achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question and the realization of lasting peace, universal security, and common prosperity in the Middle East."<sup>49</sup> <sup>50</sup>

### State of Israel

The conflict has affected Israeli people too, although not as much as Palestinians. Between 2008 and 2021, 251 Israelis were killed while 5739 Palestinians were killed, with a further 5682 Israelis injured and 121 348 Palestinians injured. As the primary perpetrator of the refugee crisis, there are no UNRWA Palestine refugee camps within the State of Israel. There are, however, camps in East Jerusalem, which is not part of the state, but is occupied by Israel. One of these camps is the Shu'fat camp. This camp was illegally annexed by Israel in 1967. Residents of this camp hold Jerusalem IDs

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<sup>48</sup>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2023/06/canada-continues-its-support-of-palestinian-refugees.html>

<sup>49</sup> <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/137192>

<sup>50</sup>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/14/chinas-xi-jinping-backs-just-cause-of-palestinian-statehood>

and are allowed to reside in Jerusalem unlike their West Bank counterparts. As a result of an attack leading to an Israeli soldier's death in October 2022, IDF troops have invaded many houses in the middle of the night, using equipment like stun grenades and tear gas in an attempt to find the perpetrator. Within the state of Israel, as of December 2019, there are 1.9 million Palestinian Israel citizens. Rights groups have documented many Israeli laws that discriminate against Palestinians, such as education, housing, political participation etc.

### **Palestine in our Committee**

This may or may not come as a surprise, but the State of Palestine will have a seat in our committee at TMUN 2023. In the United Nations, Palestine is a non-member observer state. For the purposes of our committee, the delegate of Palestine will enjoy almost completely equal treatment as other member states, with only one distinction: they will not be allowed to vote on any substantive votes (e.g. voting on passing a resolution). This means they will be able to do everything else in committee, such as making motions, speaking, voting on procedural votes, and even sponsoring papers. Delegates should treat the delegate State of Palestine as if it is any other sovereign state, but bear in mind that the State of Palestine is being represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization, not any other party.

### **Palestine Liberation Organization**

The United Nations recognizes the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the representative of Palestine. It was founded in 1964 and claims to be the sole representative of Palestine. It is a collection of different Palestinian groups, the most notable being Fatah. Fatah is the dominant party in the PLO. In 1993, during the Oslo I Accords, the PLO officially recognized Israel and its right to exist. For this reason, the delegate representing the State of Palestine should represent the Palestine Liberation Organization and its ideals at SPECPOL TMUN 2024.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, there is a group called Hamas, who first came to prominence after the first intifada. Hamas has governed Gaza since 2007 and has repeatedly conducted attacks on Israel. Hamas, unlike the PLO, does not recognize Israel's right to exist, and rejected the peace process during the Oslo I Accords, opting to continue its attacks against Israel. Many Western governments, including the EU and US, have classified Hamas as a terrorist group. As a result, it does not receive any funding given from those governments to the PLO.<sup>52</sup>

### **Things to Consider**

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<sup>51</sup> <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounder/palestine-liberation-organization-plo>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-13331522>

Something important to consider especially when dealing with this sensitive issue is your country's stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Is there any policy in place that is preventing your country from helping either side's refugees? On another note, does your country even have the capacity to directly support the refugees? Also something very important is what your nation supports to be the "end" of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If a nation is in support of a two-state solution, they might support policy which works to build a separate Palestinian identity, economy, and system. However, if your nation is in support of a one-state solution, they might support policy which aims to integrate and/or assimilate the two groups of people and especially de-escalate conflict and tensions between them. At the end of the day, we are not here to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but we are here to address the refugees that have come out of this conflict, and the stances on the conflict may play a role in your decision making in this committee.

### **Guiding Questions**

What are some of the biggest challenges faced by host nations of refugee camps?

What are the political and social dynamics between Palestinian refugees and host communities?

How has your country contributed to Palestinian refugees in the past, if at all?

How can human rights be preserved among refugees?

What impact do domestic political considerations have on foreign policy decisions related to Palestinian refugees?

To what extent does your nation hold Israel accountable for its actions related to Palestinian refugees?

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