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Israel-Hamas War: A Critical Analysis of Humanitarian Challenges and UN Agencies Response

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Abstract

The war between Israel and Hamas has led to a critical humanitarian disaster in Gaza, resulting in over 45,000 fatalities, 1.9 million people displaced, and almost complete destruction of infrastructure. This research investigates the response from the UN, highlighting the obstacles faced in providing aid due to political and operational challenges. Although agencies like UNRWA, WFP, and UNESCO have made attempts to deliver food, shelter, and safety, their efforts were obstructed by funding reductions, restrictions on access, and geopolitical conflicts. UN resolutions demanding ceasefires and the facilitation of humanitarian access have been undermined by a lack of enforcement mechanisms, limiting their effectiveness. The results emphasize the ongoing shortcomings in safeguarding civilians and supplying impartial aid during wartime. The current situation emphasizes the necessity for more robust international frameworks to enforce humanitarian laws, guarantee unbiased funding, and reinvigorate diplomatic approaches that tackle underlying issues. Without necessary structural changes, such extensive human suffering is likely to recur in future conflicts.

Keywords: UN Agencies, Humanitarian Crisis, Israel-Hamas, Conflict, International Humanitarian Law.



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Introduction

The Arab Israel region has been surfacing conflict for over 7 decades. Particularly Palestinian people experience most of the war era. Jerusalem is known as the ‘Holy Land’ because of the significance of the major religions, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. This region has many other significant resources, like oil, that are fundamentally important for western countries. Different researchers try to evaluate the main cause of the region conflict, which considered its territory, national identity, and sovereignty of the region. Palestine-Israel is the most prominent conflict in the Middle East, and a recent attack from the Hamas renewed the tension once again, capturing the focus of world politics (Peer, 2023).

On the day of 07 October, Hamas initiated operation AL-AQSA Flood against Israel with the launching of 5000 missiles in the initial phase, and Hamas members crossed the border. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeatedly stated that Israel wants “total victory” over the Hamas, which includes destroying the Hamas military wing and government capabilities in Gaza and recovering all hostages (Elmalı & Burak, 2023). Unfortunately, this event destroyed the peace and diplomatic efforts that were initiated in the presence of America between the Muslim states of the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco. This country is banned in a peace agreement called Abraham accord in 2020.

The current dispute resulted in 1.9 million people displaced, 90 % infrastructure destroyed, and a shortage of food, water, health care, and essential services and supplies that are necessary for the basic needs of human beings. According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) as of September 2024, humanitarian aid probably put a stop to famine, but “hunger and malnutrition remain dire, and hunger-related morality is likely still occurring” (FEWSN, 2024).

In January 2024, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued the arrest warrants of both side leaders, but they have no enforcement mechanism. However, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted four resolutions on a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel, and three times America gave a vote against it (BBC News, 2024). This was not only the central focus of non-state actors, but regional powers and global main countries like Russia, China, and the USA have sight of the Middle East. International actors, including the United Nations, European Union, and many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), play a vital role in mediating and providing humanitarian assistance in the Gaza Strip (Ogochukwu & Nneka, 2024).

There are many obstacles on the road to a sustainable peace agreement. A major barrier is the profound mistrust that exists on both sides. The fundamental impasse is caused by Hamas’s refusal to acknowledge Israel’s right to exist and by Israel’s strong security concerns. Furthermore, the negotiation process is complicated by internal political dynamics in both Israel and the Palestinian territories. In Israel, coalition governments frequently consist of parties with varying perspectives on the peace process, whereas in Gaza, Hamas is under pressure from more radical factions that reject any kind of compromise (Bargués & Bourekba, 2024).

The two-state resolution continues to be the most practical framework for addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as highlighted by international mediators and experts. Traditionally, this strategy envisions an autonomous State of Palestine existing alongside the State of Israel, founded on pre-1967 borders with mutually agreed land exchanges. Although it has been repeatedly supported by the United Nations and significant global stakeholders, the two-state resolution encounters considerable obstacles, including entrenched distrust, security issues, political disunity on both sides, and the growth of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Additionally, the intricate geography, with Palestinian enclaves scattered among Israeli territory, complicates territorial continuity and governance. Mediation efforts led by the United States, Qatar, and Egypt have attempted to bring the leadership of both groups back to negotiations, aiming to surmount these challenges. Nevertheless, the lack of a unified agreement among major powers, along with internal divisions within Palestinian and Israeli communities, continues to obstruct advancement. Recent diplomatic efforts have nearly achieved a ceasefire in the conflict, yet enduring peace remains out of reach without renewed dedication to the principles of the two-state solution and addressing the humanitarian and political realities present on the ground. A comprehensive strategy is crucial for achieving a fair and lasting resolution to the conflict (PASSIA, 2024).

Literature Review

“Israel-Hamas Cease-Fire in Gaza” report written by Jim Zanotti and Jeremy M. Sharp Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs. This report outlines the cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hamas, scheduled to take effect on January 19, 2025, following 15 months of hostilities. This plan consists of three stages, beginning with a six-week phase that includes a hostage-prisoner exchange, the repositioning of Israeli forces, an increase in humanitarian aid, and the return of displaced citizens. Facilitated by the United States, Egypt, and Qatar, this agreement builds upon President Biden's framework established in May 2024. Despite the weakening of Hamas's military capabilities, the threat of renewed violence persists. Congressional discussions in the U.S. will concentrate on security aid, maintaining regional stability, and providing humanitarian assistance, alongside discussions regarding a possible role for a restructured Palestinian Authority in Gaza, which faces skepticism from Israel (Zanotti & Sharp, 2025).

“ Hamas-Israel War: A Brief Analysis of First Two Phases of War” written by Maria Bordas. This article explores the ongoing tension between Hamas and Israel, which intensified significantly on October 7, 2023, leading to a close examination of Israel's goals in Gaza. The unexpected attack by Hamas resulted in more than 1,400 Israeli fatalities, highlighting major shortcomings in intelligence and security protocols. Despite having advanced surveillance systems, Hamas was able to exploit existing vulnerabilities to execute its offensive. Warnings from Israeli intelligence regarding the escalating threats from political turmoil were ignored by Prime Minister Netanyahu. While Israel's goal is to eliminate Hamas, the feasibility of accomplishing this aim is uncertain. The conflict has worsened regional instability, increasing the risk of a broader conflict that could involve Hezbollah, Iran, and the Houthis. Additionally, Israel's handling of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is straining its ties with the United States and other international partners (Bordas & Maria, 2024).

“Public health Situation Analysis on hostilities in the occupied Palestinian territory” WHO report- 2 May 2024. Gaza is already suffering from many problems, but the current war is reaching extreme levels of destruction, continue massacres and unprecedented food shortages for the future birth of children and the urgent need to protect human lives. There is a need for international organizations to provide full support and make local and foreign citizens safe. Israel Defense Forces bombed hospitals, refugee camps, and educational buildings and did not follow the law of war. Current Gaza calls for change and a coordinated effort to aid (WHO, 2024).

“Prospects for Peace: Exploring Diplomatic Initiatives and Challenges in the Israeli-Hamas Conflict,” written by Nneka Ogochukwu in August 2024. The prospect of peace between Israel and Hamas is complicated by a variety of internal and regional politics, due to both governmental and socioeconomic factors. Regional and global initiatives are essential to facilitate dialogue and

mediation with the help of human rights and civil society organizations, fostering the reconciliation process between them. Designing a peace framework in line with geopolitical understanding and providing better socio-economic and humanitarian assistance will address the concerns of both sides. Drawing on lessons from other conflict regions, initiate comprehensive dialogue, education, and cultural diplomacy can play an important role in achieving peaceful strategies (Ogochukwu & Nneka, 2024)

“From Past to Present: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” written by Burak Elmalı in November 2023. The Palestine-Israel conflict, a long-standing and complex struggle, has involved numerous participants throughout various periods. Central to this issue are the systematic colonial actions of Israel aimed at displacing the indigenous Palestinian population, which has fostered a resilient spirit of resistance. The recent incidents, starting with the Hamas attacks on October 7 and Israel’s military response in Gaza, are marked by a disproportionate application of force against civilians and deliberate attacks on hospitals, public infrastructure, and residential areas, all of which can be traced back to the broader historical context of the conflict. This information pack explored the historical trajectory of the conflict and its current situation, presenting a multifaceted view that incorporates both the Zionist perspective and the long-established Palestinian viewpoint, highlighting the deep-rooted and enduring nature of this issue. (Elmalı & Burak, 2023)

Research Questions

Q 1: What role have played by the UN Agencies to addressing the human rights violation in Gaza following the 2023 conflict?

Q 2: How does the humanitarian assistance address the root cause of the crisis, such as poverty, food security, healthcare, and the educational system?

Research Methodology

This research is based on secondary sources of data collection and qualitative analysis from authentic sources such as the United Nations, World Bank, Famine Early Warning System Network, and government publications. Content analysis of media reports, official statements, peace accords, and academic articles was conducted to identify recurring themes and narratives related to diplomatic initiatives, regional dynamics, and challenges. The researcher focused on the historical space of Israel and Palestine as well as the recent events as a source and solution to the environmental peacebuilding of the conflict. As a result, this study offers critical insights into the diplomatic, humanitarian, and geopolitical dimensions of the Israel-Hamas conflict, unsuccessful mediation and repeated violations of international law and shows how present peace agreements lack the strength to provide a lasting end to the conflict.

Humanitarian Crisis: A Region in Peril

Demonstrating its objectives with same zeal and zest, Hamas took 250 hostages in recent attacks in 2023, subsequently a month-long retort from Israel's defense forces (IDF) that initially with phosphorus weaponries and continued with aerial strikes; these retaliatory actions have led to mass civilian and non-civilian casualties and make a cause destruction of vigorous infrastructure such as homes, schools, and hospitals in Gaza. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has remained adamant in his commitment to the two primary political aims of eliminating Hamas's military capabilities and securing the release of the hostages.

Key events have drawn the main developments of the war since 07 October 2023. Firstly, Israeli airstrikes produced in widespread killings and a humanitarian tragedy in the past month, following a warning to 2.3 million Palestinian inhabitants to leave the Gaza Strip towards the southern region

(Ylenia Gostoli, 2023). The situation converted into a humanitarian crisis when big groups, particularly children, were primarily denied access to provide aid from Egypt until hostages were return to Israel. Secondly, Israel targeted nearly 40000 sites between October 7th and November 2024, deploying 65000 tons of explosives, marking it as the most aggressive bombing campaign in recent times (Shamala, 2025).

The intelligent bombs have caused significant destruction to housing, healthcare and educational, along with ambulances. Thirdly, the ongoing blackout remained a prominent feature of Israel's military war campaign in Gaza, leaving civilians without communication services, mobile and internet networks for extended periods, creating heightened uncertainty and fear. Despite efforts to alleviate the situation, the movement of goods and fuel was restricted, as evidenced by the blockade of 25,000 liters of diesel sent through Egypt, causing to the collapse of crucial required services such as hospitals, water pumps, bakeries, and sewage systems.

Fourthly, Hamas and the IDF have been engaged in what has been referred to as 'microelectronic warfare (EW)', where Hamas use underground networks to neutralize Israeli EW capabilities. Lastly, the intense bombing and shelling that targeted medical facilities have remained a troubling feature of the conflict. The World Health Organization (WHO) has considered Al Shifa, the main hospital in the Gaza Strip, as a death zone, resulting in the deaths of many unsympathetically ill patients and children. Apart from these developments, Israel has been criticized by the international community for engaging in an inhumane method used towards journalists and civilians, keeping no difference between them and the military substances.

As of December 31, 2024, preliminary findings from CPJ indicated that at least 150 journalists and media personnel were among the over 45,000 individuals killed since the war began, marking the deadliest time for journalists since CPJ began compiling data in 1992. This was confirmed after ensuring the safety of the journalist. Israel's ongoing military actions, due to the lack of accountability, have worsened conditions in Gaza. To begin with, it accused The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) of complicity in the Hamas attacks on October 7, which resulted in Western nations reducing their funding during the humanitarian crisis in Gaza in January 2024 (Safdar, 2024).

Despite Israel not offering any conclusive evidence, it sustained media scrutiny. Consequently, concerns about the agency's impartiality arose, as its primary goal was to ensure Palestinians received humanitarian aid. To worsen the situation, it consistently obstructed aid efforts for Gaza, resulting in famine-like conditions. Research conducted by a group in April 2024 across Egypt, Jordan, and Israel found that due to insufficient food, water, medicine, and shelter, famine has escalated, leading to dire circumstances. The US, in collaboration with Jordan, has been attempting to airlift food into Gaza since Israeli forces confronted those attempting to reach the aid vehicles on the ground.

Israel has been consistently engaged in aggressive military assaults, inhumane treatment, and indiscriminate killings of innocent Palestinians, including vulnerable groups such as injured women, children, and the elderly who come to seek assistance. In December 2024, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) published a report that highlighted the dire circumstances faced by Gaza's civilian population and, most notably, the humanitarian consequences of the conflict. Apart from causing casualties and inflicting injuries to almost 45,936 and 109,274 people (OCHA, 2025).

The conflict has led to nearly 90% of Gaza's population being displaced, which amounts to around 1.9 million people, in addition to over 11000 individuals who are missing. Surprisingly, each

resident of Gaza is living in just 01 square meters of space within an IDP shelter, which is often cramped and damp due to rainfall. Furthermore, 1.1 million individuals are experiencing severe food insecurity, and currently only two-thirds of the water pipelines from Israel are operational, providing access to mostly contaminated water. As the occupying force, Israel has failed to ensure the well-being of the affected population and address the humanitarian needs at hand (Bilak, 2025).

Immediate Humanitarian Challenges

Causalities and Displacement

Since December 30, 2024, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has gone on dangerous levels, according to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that at least 45,541 Palestinians people have lost their lives since the start of war began on October 7, 2023. This holistic figure reflects the profound impact of continuous military actions and rivalries in the area. Among those reported deaths, a particular portion has been acknowledged, with 40,717 people's secret according to gender and age. The breakdown reveals a painful toll on various demographics 16,735 men, 13,319 children, and 7,216 females 3,447 aging individuals have been confirmed dead (MoH Gaza, 2024).

Also, 108,338 people have been injured since the conflict began, according to a report by OCHA. These data indicate that the remaining individuals are not injured but suffer psychological trauma as a result of their experiences. Gaza's health infrastructure has been damaged by constant Israeli airstrikes and a lack of resources and it makes it more difficult and complex for medical professionals who provide services to the injured. Hospitals have no room for more casualties and some require immediate attention to medical facilities.

The situation is has worsened by widespread displacement; about 90% of Gaza's population has been forced to escape their homes due to violence and devastation. Families have taken refuge in overcrowded shelters with very limited necessities such as food, pure water, and sanitation is harshly limited. Humanitarian response has struggled to meet pace with the overwhelming needs of those affected. Aid organizations appearance significant challenges in delivering support due to ongoing hostilities and restrictions on movement within and into Gaza (MoH Gaza, 2024).

Healthcare System Collapse

Gaza's health situation is still critical, explaining how active conflict and military operations damage hospitals and other public health services available to ordinary people. In recent times, a little more than half of the assessed hospitals in Gaza are still working and under bombardment by the Israeli military. Right now, about 11 hospitals are working, but only 5 are functioning properly and 6 are somewhat functional at sites across the country. The primary healthcare system is in a similar state, because only 52 of its centers are working (WHO, 2025).

UNRWA claims that about a quarter of the healthcare system is still functioning, while emergency medical teams have major shortages, with just 20 teams on duty in Gaza. The square footage occupied by local hospitals in northern Gaza has almost halved and the closure of Al-Awda was the final straw, forcing patients to be moved immediately under intense bombing and serious supply shortages. This hospital is the only medical center in northern Gaza, so its shutdown leaves the area's people without medical care. The World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that ever since the conflict started, more than 1,400 healthcare workers were killed and numerous attacks on hospitals and clinics have left them inoperable.

The fighting or evacuation notices have prevented Kamal Adwan Hospital, Indonesia Hospital and European Gaza Hospital from operating. The system is facing shortages of medications, medical

supplies, fuel and workers and many facilities use generators and cannot get access to clean water. There are now about 2,000 hospital beds for a population of 2 million in Gaza and this number is at risk because of ongoing displacements and attacks (Al Jazeera , 2025).

Food Scarcity and Nutrition

The food scarcity situation in Gaza has already reached the famine threshold, on November 8 2024 IPC famine review committee reported that 91 percent (1.95 million) people face hunger, 876000 individuals are facing emergency levels of food insecurity and 345000 individuals are in critical condition. The continuous conflict has disrupted agricultural land leading to particular damage to main resources. Reports include that 52 percent of agricultural wells, 68 percent of cropland and 44 percent of greenhouse areas have been damaged due to conflict which directly reduced the local food production. The fishing industry also suffered greatly with the destroyed 72 percent of the fish fleet.

The static of livestock has been devastating as well, nearby 15,000 cattle 95 percent of Gaza's total have died. Other livestock which are sheep, and goats, are alive lower than 50 percent. This dangerous level of loss not only affects food scarcity but also families that are dependent on agriculture and animal husbandry for their sustenance. Over 90 percent of children aged between 6 to 23 months and women have nutritional concerns that cause health risks and long-term development challenges for children. An estimated survey reports that 290,000 children under five years and 150,000 pregnant women need immediate feeding and nutrients to address malnutrition (FAO, 2024).

Role of United Nation and It Agencies

The United Nations, along with its affiliated organizations, actively tackles humanitarian challenges and political issues stemming from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The General Assembly and Security Council utilize diplomatic frameworks to issue mandates that call for both ceasefires and the delivery of humanitarian aid, while also ensuring the protection of civilians. UNRWA and other specialized agencies have provided essential services to Palestinian refugees, including food distribution, shelter, educational facilities, and medical care during periods of escalating violence and displacement. The UN continues to play a vital role in facilitating international cooperation for humanitarian relief and achieving sustainable regional peace, despite facing political obstacles, budget cuts, and operational risks.

United Nations General Assembly

October 27, 2023, will be forever etched in the annals of history. Analysts have recognized as the latest intensification of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has resulted in a significant humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip during the twenty-first century. The blend of national, community, and individual destruction creates ripple effects across regional and global geopolitical, economic, social security, and ethical dialogues, leading to widespread demands for change. The United Nations General Assembly serves as a multilateral forum for global discussions on issues outlined in the United Nations Charter and formulates international and global policies. In light of the ongoing Israeli-Hamas conflict, the United Nations General Assembly introduced several non-binding resolutions.

On October 27, 2023, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution ES-10/21, titled "Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations," in response to the escalating Israeli-Hamas war. This conflict has escalated into one of the most severe humanitarian crises witnessed in the Gaza Strip during the twenty-first century. Lawmakers from Jordan

proposed this resolution, which garnered support from 47 nations, calling for an immediate and ongoing humanitarian ceasefire alongside a halt to military actions. The resolution condemned violence against civilian populations from both sides while urging compliance with international humanitarian law.

The United Nations dismissed an attempt to introduce an amendment that would specifically denounce the Hamas attacks of October 7. The resolution received 121 votes in favor, with 14 countries opposing it and 44 abstaining. Through non-binding avenues, the resolution served as an indicator of global concern regarding civilian casualties while underscoring the urgent humanitarian assistance needs in Gaza. The resolution highlighted significant divisions among member states on how to balance the condemnation of violence with calls for reducing tensions (Meetings Coverage General Assembly, 2023).

In response to the worsening crisis conditions, the General Assembly proposed additional measures. On December 12, 2023, the General Assembly passed another resolution (A/ES-10/L.27) that called for immediate humanitarian ceasefire arrangements in Gaza. The resolution received backing from 153 nations and reinforced three main demands: the protection of civilians, the immediate release of all hostages, and the unrestricted flow of humanitarian aid. The extraordinary situation in Gaza raised global alarms regarding the escalating instability in the region, resulting in food shortages, significant population displacement, and a collapse of the healthcare system.

This resolution required all parties involved to adhere to the international legal obligations outlined in the Geneva Conventions and called for diplomatic teams to intensify their efforts toward achieving lasting peace. The resolution garnered 153 votes in favor, while the United States and Israel, along with ten other nations, voted against it, and an additional twenty-three countries opted to abstain. The urgent crisis prompted UN Secretary-General António Guterres to invoke Article 99 of the UN Charter, which allows him to bring critical issues to the attention of the Security Council (Meetings Coverage General Assembly , 2023).

A third resolution (A/ES-10/L.30) was passed by the General Assembly on December 11th, 2024, calling for an unconditional and permanent ceasefire in Gaza. Supporters of this resolution achieved victory with 158 votes in favor, while 9 votes opposed and 13 members chose to abstain. It emphasized the necessity of releasing all hostages and granting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) unrestricted access to distribute aid throughout Gaza and the West Bank. United Nations members reiterated their commitment to a two-state solution by expressing their support for Israel and Palestine coexisting peacefully. The resolution condemned all forms of violations of international law and stressed the significance of protecting civilians as the humanitarian crisis continued to escalate. As part of the resolution, Israel was urged to eliminate roadblocks that obstructed humanitarian assistance, while global parties reaffirmed their collective call for a peaceful resolution and the maintenance of a ceasefire (Meeting Coverage General Assembly, 2024).

Security Council

The United Nations Security Council acts as an external body to assess conflicts and help alleviate humanitarian suffering during wartime. The United Nations has officially condemned all parties involved in the violence. However, the Security Council has refrained from exercising authority over the conflicting parties by imposing sanctions, deploying peacekeeping forces, or conducting coordinated military operations. Following Hamas's attacks on October 7, 2023, numerous Security Council sessions were held to address the escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The Russian Federation put forth the Council's first formal effort to tackle this situation with its draft resolution on October 16, 2023. This resolution (S/2023/773) called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to facilitate aid delivery but did not pass, as it garnered five votes in favor, four against, and six abstentions. Western nations, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, criticized the draft for not supporting Israeli self-defense actions and for lacking strong condemnations of Hamas's attacks on civilians. In defense of their proposal, Russia stressed the urgency of stopping all harm to civilians to enable aid operations.

The Security Council executed its initial resolution related to Gaza by adopting resolution 2712 on November 15, 2023. This significant resolution marked a considerable step forward by calling for prompt yet prolonged temporary ceasefires to allow for the distribution of humanitarian aid to those affected. As part of this resolution, the Council urged for the immediate release of all hostages, with an emphasis on children, and demanded full adherence to international humanitarian standards. This resolution garnered support from twelve member nations, while three—the United Kingdom, Russia, and the United States—opted to abstain. The resolution was successful in reaching a consensus on the urgent need to alleviate civilian suffering and to establish humanitarian assistance programs as the situation in Gaza rapidly worsened (Security Council Press Release, 2024).

In response to these actions, the Security Council passed further resolutions aimed at enhancing humanitarian support and promoting de-escalation. In March 2024, fourteen members of the Security Council voted in favor of a resolution calling for a partial ceasefire during the Islamic month of Ramadan, with all member states except the United States backing this resolution. During the same period, the Security Council approved a proposal to grant Palestine full UN membership privileges. States representing the push for Palestinian statehood voiced their discontent when the United States vetoed their resolution.

On June 10, 2024, the Security Council made a significant decision by approving Resolution 2735, with all members voting in favor, while Russian representatives chose to abstain during the discussions on that date. The first phase of the plan called for Israel to carry out complete ceasefire efforts, facilitate prisoner exchanges, ensure the swift establishment of a ceasefire, withdraw from urban areas, and enhance humanitarian aid deliveries. The second phase of the ceasefire plan mandated that all conflicting parties cease hostilities indefinitely, arrange for the release of hostages, and require a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

Phase Three set the timeline for the return of remains of deceased hostages as part of the reconstruction process for Gaza in the following years. The United Nations Security Council insisted that Hamas and all involved parties accept the agreement unconditionally and entirely reject any changes to Gaza's territory or its population as stated in the resolution. The resolution affirmed that the international community would continue to support peace efforts based on the two-state solution (Nicholson, 2024).

UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)

UNRWA serves as the main humanitarian organization providing assistance to Palestinian refugees residing in the Gaza Strip during the conflict period of 2023–2025. The rise in violence, coupled with worsening infrastructure and a growing refugee population, has compelled the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to significantly broaden its relief efforts. Despite encountering significant budget cuts and restricted access to the Gaza Strip, UNRWA has restructured its operations by adapting its services.

Medical Services, Humanitarian Aid and Shelter Support

The humanitarian assistance offered by UNRWA saw significant expansion after the onset of conflicts on October 7, 2023. Before the conflict began, the agency was providing food aid to approximately 80,000 individuals. By 2025, this figure had increased to over one million, as UNRWA supplied around sixty percent of all food delivered to Gaza during the active ceasefire. Despite the halt of Israeli border imports of humanitarian and commercial goods on March 2, 2025, UNRWA continues to offer food aid to nearly the entire population of Gaza.

The crucial role of UNRWA in delivering healthcare in Gaza under Hamas control is highlighted by the fact that it has facilitated over 7.8 million medical consultations from October 2023 to March 2025. During the ceasefire period, health professionals conducted 507,000 healthcare visits for patients, particularly focusing on antenatal and postnatal care, dental and oral health treatments, as well as physiotherapy services. These medical services were delivered through both fixed and mobile clinics, which operated under constant threats to their staff and health facilities (UNRWA, 2025).

UNRWA's shelters accommodate 148,000 displaced individuals across the 116 sites they operate. The agency continues to distribute emergency shelter, while more than 500,000 people have received essential non-food items such as mattresses, blankets, clothing, and kitchen supplies. Additionally, UNRWA expanded its tent distribution program to assist 14,400 families, providing bedding materials to over 100,000 families to meet their basic needs and shield them from environmental hazards in their limited living spaces (UNRWA, 2025).

Psychosocial Support, Education and Displacement Response

UNRWA's primary responsibility includes offering educational opportunities to those it serves. The agency established Temporary Learning Spaces that reached 44,000 children and constructed over 130 facilities to support educational programs. The expansion of programming for psychosocial support (PSS) emphasized addressing the trauma faced by displaced children and families. These programs aim to enhance the mental health and emotional resilience of affected individuals through counseling and organized activities. Since January 2025, military actions in the northern West Bank by Israeli forces have led to the largest displacement since 1967, prompting UNRWA to provide immediate aid along with mental health support in these areas. The newly expanded assistance reflects UNRWA's commitment to protect Palestinian communities regardless of where they face the impacts of conflict.

Legal Threats, Operational Challenges and International Response

The outlook for UNRWA is compromised by numerous legal, political, and logistical hurdles, yet the organization continues to carry out its vital role. In March 2024, the U.S. Congress halted financial support for UNRWA through Public Law 118-47, driven by allegations that some of its staff were connected to the attacks on October 7, with the funding freeze expected to last until March 25, 2025. This financial decision has severely impacted UNRWA's ability to plan its budget. Meanwhile, the Israeli government has begun advocating for restrictive legislation against UNRWA set to be implemented in early 2025, targeting its operations in Gaza, Jerusalem, and the West Bank.

The operational circumstances worsened when Israel declared on March 9, 2025, that it would reduce electricity generation in Gaza, putting crucial facilities like the South Gaza Desalination Plant at risk. The already limited 10% of the population with access to clean drinking water makes these new limitations even more perilous in the context of an ongoing public health crisis. Since

the outbreak of hostilities, UNRWA has tragically lost 265 employees who made the ultimate sacrifice for humanitarian service. Between October 7, 2023, and January 8, 2025, the Gaza Health Ministry recorded 45,936 Palestinian deaths and more than 109,000 injuries, underscoring the devastating human toll of the conflict.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, along with prominent humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, consistently calls for a permanent ceasefire grounded in international humanitarian law to facilitate safe humanitarian assistance. UNRWA and other humanitarian groups require safeguards for their independence and neutrality as they provide crucial support that upholds the survival and dignity of millions in the region (Zanotti & Margesson, 2025).

World Food Programme

The United Nations World Food Programme operates to address the major food insecurity and hunger issues that emerged from the Israel-Hamas conflict starting in October 2023. The World Food Programme flagged the critical situation in Gaza shortly after the conflict started on October 7, 2023 because it had caused catastrophic effects particularly on children and vulnerable groups because of food production and distribution interruptions. In the middle of 2024 UN agencies working with WFP and WHO declared Gaza faced a complete famine condition because more than 1.9 million people became displaced while over 2.2 million residents faced hunger risks.

Researchers found that northern Gaza recorded severe malnutrition affecting 15.6% of young children below two while the south reported only 5% according to reports involving humanitarian aid distribution patterns. The organization made an immediate request for access to humanitarian supplies without restriction because it needed to deliver essential food assistance (Magramo, McCluskey, & Hansler, 2024). The WFP stopped food assistance in North Gaza early 2024 because of escalating conflict which made Hamas condemn the organization for a dangerous situation that led to food shortage risks.

The WFP sustained its emergency food package deliveries and wheat flour distribution to bakeries and essential nutritional aid for children along with nursing mothers through short cessations of fighting. The humanitarian situation became dire in early 2025 when Israeli border closures started on March 2, 2025 to block any entry of humanitarian supplies and business cargo through Gaza entrances. The WFP directed its final food delivery to Gaza kitchens which will soon empty their stockpiles because the blockade caused the WFP to exhaust its whole Gaza food supply by April 2025. People relying on WFP food assistance face starvation threats because food prices skyrocketed to 1,400% while cooking fuel shortage combined with lack of clean water resulted in 400,000 people at risk (WFP, 2025).

The WFP benefited from the 42-day ceasefire of early 2025 to expand its aid programs which distributed assistance to 1.3 million people while supporting the distribution of bread through bakeries. The WFP transported nearly 47,000 metric tons of food through their operations during February 2025 which exceeded the late 2024 delivery figure by 200%. The Worldwide Food Programme expanded its cash-based assistance system to strengthen food security in Gaza and the West Bank while supporting their local market sectors. When military operations cease active fighting the carefully built progress easily crumbles into nothing as fighting restarts (WFP Editorial, 2025).

A million people have access to food for four months through 116,000 metric tons of food aid stored in humanitarian corridors as Gaza opens its border checkpoints. WFP asks all parties to

preserve international humanitarian law because they need to provide secure and unobstructed access to supply aid to prevent mass starvation and starvation-related problems across the population (Aljazeera, 2025).

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Since October 07 2023 UNESCO has launched protective measures for journalists and cultural asset protection and educational support in the conflict-affected zones during the Israel-Hamas conflict. UNESCO reports at least nine journalists died during the first weeks of conflict thus demonstrating the extensive death toll which includes reporters among the casualties. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) alongside other groups confirms that at least 171 journalists and media professionals were killed up until April 2025 thus making this the deadliest conflict for journalists globally (IFJ, 2025).

The Government Media Office reports that over 140 journalists lost their lives during the first seven months and Palestinian journalists constitute the primary victim group based on information from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). The attacks on media workers and journalists drew UNESCO's condemnation while the organization demanded wholehearted support for basic humanitarian rule that shields reporters and journalists under Resolution 2222/2015.

The Palestinian journalists who reported from Gaza during the crisis received the World Press Freedom Prize from UNESCO as a collective honor in May 2024. The ceremony featured touching testimonies about reporters who refuse to stop reporting despite dangers awaiting them. The Director-General of UNESCO Audrey Azoulay proclaimed that journalists demonstrate crucial duty by delivering reliable news to society both nationally and within local areas. UNESCO continues its mission to defend journalists including women journalists and maintains that internet and other communication platforms must be accessible to them (Al Jazeera, 2024).

UNESCO issued serious warnings regarding Gaza's destroyed cultural heritage sites combined with the effects they produced upon journalists. The protected cultural monuments sustained damages totaling 22 sites as of February 21, 2024, based on the data available from the United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT). The damaged sites comprised museums alongside archeological sites and religious sites. The number of confirmed damaging sites in Gaza reached 43 by April 8, 2024 (Geraldine Kendall Adams, 2024). UNESCO has pressed all combatants to respect the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention that bans harming cultural heritage during war (unesco, 1954).

The fighting conditions have caused severe damage to Gaza's entire academic infrastructure. The destruction of more than 200 educational buildings placed over 625,000 students together with 22,500 teachers in high-risk condition during late October 2023 according to UNESCO. Educational institutions in war zones remain unprotected according to UN Security Council Resolution 2601 because the resolution has failed to prevent attacks on schools serving as detention facilities along with their educational staff (unesco, 2023). During October 2023 UNESCO introduced alongside the Teacher Creativity Centre a trial program to help both children and caregivers in eight shelters throughout Khan Younis and Rafah by delivering psychological assistance services.

The conflict took the lives of more than 52,000 Palestinians and hurt over 160,000 people in Gaza before May 2025 when 1,139 Israelis lost their lives mostly including the Hamas-held prisoners. The organization will sustain its push for international law respect and civilian protection and

journalist and student safety regarding the continuous violent conditions (NBC Associated Press, 2025).

Conclusion

The conflict between Israel and Hamas has triggered one of the most critical humanitarian crises of the 21st century, characterized by widespread displacement, the widespread destruction of essential infrastructure, and dire shortages of food, water, and medical services. Despite significant efforts by UN organizations including UNRWA's emergency assistance, WFP's initiatives to combat famine, and UNESCO's safeguarding of journalists and cultural heritage the response is still hindered by political discord, budget cuts, and limited access. The Security Council's inconsistent resolutions and the General Assembly's non-binding appeals for ceasefires have not succeeded in establishing enduring peace or accountability. Although humanitarian aid mitigates immediate suffering, it fails to tackle the underlying issues, prolonged occupation, blockade policies, and the lack of a political resolution. Achieving lasting peace requires a viable two-state solution, compliance with international law, and an end to impunity for violations. Without these actions, cycles of violence and humanitarian suffering will continue.

Conflict of Interest

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