

# Understanding the Israel-Palestinian Conflict of 7 October 2023: Reasons and Consequences

## 2023 İsrail-Hamas Çatışması: Nedenler ve Sonuçlar Sertif DEMİR\*

### Abstract

This study examines the root causes and consequences of the recent Israeli–Palestinian conflict, one of the most contentious issues in the Middle East. Hamas’s attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 has had complex and far-reaching implications for Palestine and the broader region. Accordingly, the article begins with an analysis of the historical background of the conflict and then examines the founding and evolution of Hamas. Subsequently, it explores the root causes and consequences of the 7 October 2023 Israeli–Hamas war, which constitutes the core focus of the study. The analysis concludes that the primary reason for Hamas’s highly asymmetrical and unexpected attack against Israel on October 7 was likely the organization’s belief that it lacked viable alternative courses of action. However, the outcomes and effects of the attacks unfolded contrary to Hamas’s expectations. These included the near-total destruction of Gaza, the death and injury of many Palestinian civilians, the likely demilitarization of Gaza, a likely disarmament of Hamas, the termination of Hamas’s control over Gaza, and an increased risk of induced displacement of the Gazan population. Furthermore, the repercussions of the war significantly reshaped regional geopolitics, eroding existing power centers and creating new geopolitical advantages for Israel.

**Key Words:** Israel, Palestine, Hamas, October 7 attack, causes, consequences.

### Özet

Bu çalışma, Orta Doğu'nun en tartışmalı konularından biri olan son İsrail-Filistin çatışmasının temel nedenlerini ve sonuçlarını incelemektedir. Hamas'ın 7 Ekim 2023'te İsrail'e yaptığı saldırı, Filistin ve bölge için karmaşık ve kapsamlı sonuçlar doğurmuştur. Bu kapsamda, makale önce çatışmanın tarihsel arka planının analiziyle başlamakta ve ardından Hamas'ın kuruluşunu ve evrimini incelemektedir. Daha sonra, çalışmanın temel odak noktasını oluşturan 7 Ekim 2023 İsrail-Hamas savaşının temel nedenlerini ve sonuçlarını ele almaktadır. Analiz, Hamas'ın 7 Ekim'de İsrail'e karşı son derece asimetrik ve beklenmedik saldırısının temel nedeninin, örgütün uygulanabilir alternatif eylem yollarının bulunmadığına dair inancı olduğu sonucuna varmıştır. Ancak, saldırıların sonuçları ve etkileri Hamas'ın beklentilerinin aksine gelişmiştir. Bunlar arasında Gazze'nin neredeyse tamamen yıkılması, sayısız masum Filistinli sivilin ölümü ve yaralanması, muhtemelen Gazze'nin askersizleştirilmesi, muhtemelen Hamas'ın silahlisizlandırılması, Hamas'ın Gazze üzerindeki kontrolünün sona ermesi ve Gazze halkının gönüllü yerinden edilme riskinin artması yer almaktadır. Dahası, savaşın yankıları bölgesel jeopolitiği önemli ölçüde yeniden şekillendirerek mevcut güç merkezlerini aşındırmış ve İsrail için yeni jeopolitik avantajlar yaratmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İsrail, Filistin, Hamas, 7 Ekim saldırısı, nedenler, etkiler, sonuçlar.

Makale Geliş Tarihi: 20.07.2025. Makale Kabul Tarihi: 22.03.2026.

Araştırma Makalesi / Künye: DEMİR, Sertif. "Understanding the Israel-Palestinian Conflict of 7 October 2023: Reasons and Consequences". Gazi Akademik Bakış Dergisi (GABD), 19/38, (Haziran 2026): s. 227-252. <https://doi.org/10.19060/gav.1973701>

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## Introduction

The Middle East can be portrayed as a center of early civilizations and geopolitical power struggles throughout history and in the present day.<sup>1</sup> Particularly, after the awareness of the region's energy resources, the region has become an arena of conflicts of interest and struggles for global dominance. Therefore, the region has experienced various disagreements, disputes, and conflicts.

Similarly, the Gaza issue, part of the Middle East, stands out as a focal point of the dispute between Palestine and Israel. The current problematic issue began with Israel's transfer of control of Fatah to the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 2005. However, Hamas, which does not recognize Israel's right to exist as a state, brutally defeated Fatah in 2007, seizing control of the Gaza Strip and laying the foundation for the current conflict. After seizing control and administration of the Gaza Strip, Hamas continues its armed struggle against Israel with qualitatively and methodologically distinct methods of struggle.

Meanwhile, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict has long been at the heart of the conflict in the Middle East. This situation was triggered by Hamas's unexpected attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. Considering these facts, the article will begin its analysis with the historical background of the conflict, then examine the founding process of Hamas. This study will then focus on analyzing the 2023 Israel-Hamas war, beginning with its root causes and consequences. The study argues that Hamas's launch of a highly asymmetric and unexpected attack against Israel on October 7th stemmed from the assumption that the organization saw no viable alternative courses of action.

The commentary approach, which predominantly incorporates qualitative methods with a lesser emphasis on quantitative techniques, has been employed to analyze the issue

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## A brief historical background of Israel-Palestinian question

The Jewish diaspora, which began nearly two millennia ago following the Roman Empire's expulsion of Jews from their ancestral lands, is central to understanding the origins of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Despite enduring centuries of persecution, Jewish communities maintained their cultural and religious identity. Influenced by the rise of nationalism and anti-Semitism discourse during the 19th century, namely in Tzarist Russia and the Eastern Europe, To cope with increasing anti-Semitisms, Jewish society thought over the idea of Zionism—a movement aimed at establishing a Jewish homeland<sup>2</sup> in Palestine,

1 See the new happenings in Middle East in Sertif Demir and Oktay Bingol (Editors), *Yeni Orta Doğu: Aktörler, Dinamikler ve Denge Arayışları (New Middle East: Actors, Dynamics and Search for Balance)*, Baris, Ankara, 2017.

2 Alan Dowty, "How It Began, Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" ed. Asaf Siniver.

which was part of the Ottoman Empire. For Jews, the land of Canaan-current Palestine- was regarded as a sacred land promised to Abraham and his descendants by the Hebrew Bible.<sup>3</sup> Zionism, therefore, was a movement for Jewish national self-determination, seeking to return to their ancestral land in response to growing anti-Semitism and the rise of European nationalism.<sup>4</sup> The phrase “a land without a people for a people without a land” holds significant relevance in the Zionist narrative concerning the roots of the Israel- Palestine conflict.<sup>5</sup>

The opportunity to establish a Jewish state emerged after World War I. The defeat of the Ottoman Empire resulted in the division of its territories among the victorious European powers. During the war, many Arab tribes, including Palestinians, supported the British forces, anticipating that they would gain independence following the Ottomans’ defeat.<sup>6</sup> In reality, Britain hold a significant role in sowing the seeds of conflict by promising the same land to two different groups: first to the Arabs in 1916 to gain their support in war against Ottomans, and then to the Jews in 1917 through the Balfour Declaration<sup>7</sup>, which affirmed Britain’s commitment to establishing a Jewish state.<sup>8</sup> However, after World War I, the League of Nations placed Palestine under British mandate, which paved the way for the establishment of a Jewish homeland.

Between 1920 and 1948, Jewish migration to Palestine increased, leading to growing tensions between Jewish and Arab communities. These tensions culminated in 1948 when the United Nations (UN) partitioned Palestine, creating the Jewish state of Israel and the Arab Muslim state of Palestine.<sup>9</sup>

Palestinians rejected partition, and immediately following Israel’s declaration of independence, conflicts erupted resulting in an Israeli victory and the displacement of almost 700,000 Palestinian refugees. This event is known as the Nakba (catastrophe)<sup>10</sup> and remains a tragedy that still shapes Palestinian identity and politics.

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*Companion to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, London, New York, Routledge, 2023, 29-41; Donna R. Divine, “Zionism”, Edt. Siniver, *Companion to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 75-88.

- 3 Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017*, Metropolitan Books, New York 2020.
- 4 Oded Nir, “A short history of Zionist and Israeli political Marxism”, *Journal of Israeli History*, XXXVIII/1, 2020, pp. 147-172.
- 5 Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*, Beacon Press, Boston 2006.
- 6 Asaf Siniver, “Introduction”, Edt. *Companion to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Taylor & Francis Group 2022, p. 3.
- 7 Ibid, p. 3.
- 8 Ian Lustick, “The Balfour Declaration a Century Later: Accidentally Relevant”, *Middle East Policy*, XXIV/4 2017, pp. 166-176; Siniver, *Introduction*, p. 3.
- 9 Khalidi, *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine...*, 2020.
- 10 Nur Masalha, “60 Years after the Nakba: Historical Truth, Collective Memory and Ethical Obligations”, *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies* III/1, 2007, pp. 37–88.

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In the years after the establishment of Israel, Palestinians engaged in numerous conflicts with the Israeli state, but each conflict ultimately resulted in Israel gaining more power and advantages. In the 1960s, believing that the ongoing struggle would not secure Palestinian independence, the Palestinian leadership, inspired by the prevalent leftist guerrilla tactics of the time, adopted a strategy of armed resistance. Under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Yasser Arafat. The PLO gained significant international attention for its guerrilla tactics and campaigns. However, the characteristics of the resistance changed from guerrilla strategy in the late 1980s and early 2000s to mass uprisings known as the intifada.

Following the end of the Cold War, with the support of the Clinton administration, the Oslo Accords of 1993 were signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The agreements were primarily based on the principle of “peace for land.”<sup>11</sup> As a result of the agreement, a Palestinian Authority (PA) was established to govern the Palestinian territories. However, the agreements failed to resolve critical issues, such as the final demarcation of borders, the status and return of Palestinian refugees and the status of Jerusalem. In the subsequent period, the détente achieved was replaced by hard-line policies due to the increasing influence of radical groups on both sides.

Within this context, the failure of successive peace processes and Israel's preference for a policy focused on securing its own people rather than pursuing peace have contributed to the continuation of the conflict. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's statement in 2000, following the collapse of peace talks, that “there are no partners for peace with Palestine,” reflects the absence of a counter-political force capable of governing the entire Palestinian society. In other words, it reflects the concern that an agreement solely with the Palestinian Authority might not be accepted by other Palestinian groups. Therefore, Israel's focus has shifted from building trust to unilateral actions including use of force if necessary<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, following the 11 September attack, the likelihood of success for peace talks between Israel and Palestine significantly decreased. The dynamics took place in subsequent years such as the US war on terror strategy, the US' military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Arab Spring, and the Syrian civil war<sup>13</sup> have contributed to Israel's unwillingness to

11 See details in Petter Bauck and Mohammed Omer, *The Oslo Accords 1993–2013: A Critical Assessment*, The American University Press, Cairo 2017.

12 Raz K. Peter, *Understanding Israel's War In Gaza*. Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, 2023, p. 4.

13 See Syrian crisis in Sertif Demir and Carmen Rijnoveanu “The Impact of the Syria Crisis on the Global and Regional Political Dynamics”, *Türk Dünyası İncelemeleri Dergisi* XIII/1, Summer 2013, pp. 55-77 and Sertif Demir, “Irak ve Suriye Krizlerinin Karşılaştırılmalı Analizi: Nedenler, Gelişmeler, ve Türkiye Üzerine Etkileri” (Comparative Analysis of Iraq and Syria

participate in peace negotiations. Furthermore, the failure of significant peace initiatives like the Oslo and Camp David Accords has further weakened confidence between Israel and Palestine. Moreover, as reflected in Israeli elections, the rise of extremist fundamentalism and the rise rightest populism in Israeli society have diminished the influence of moderate left-wing parties that previously advocated for “peace for land” principles in Israeli politics.

Israel subsequently opted for a security-focused policy rather than pursuing a lasting peace agreement with the Palestinian Authority. This policy generally focused on ensuring the safety of Israeli citizens through measures such as constructing security barriers, imposing land, sea, and air blockades on the Gaza Strip, developing the Iron Dome system against Hamas missile attacks, and establishing new settlements in Palestinian territories. Prior to the attack, there had been repeated clashes between Hamas and Israel in 2008, 2014, 2020, and 2021.

### **Hamas: A challenging actor in Palestinian resistance**

Hamas originated as an extension of the radical religious ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimun) in Egypt, which aimed to establish an Islamic state.<sup>14</sup> Founded in the 1980s during the First Intifada, Hamas—short for *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya* (the Movement of Islamic Resistance)—quickly became a significant political and militant force in Palestinian affairs. Its founder, Ahmad Yassin, was a dedicated supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood and opposed the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.<sup>15</sup> Immediately after its establishment, Hamas presented itself as a charitable organization providing basic services to Palestinians, such as food, healthcare, and humanitarian aid. This policy, incorporating traditional methods of the religiously radical Muslim Brotherhood, helped the organization gain broad support among Palestinians and ensured that its ideological stance was embedded within Palestinian society.<sup>16</sup>

Bear in mind that the key factor in the rise of Hamas was the widespread religiosity among Palestinians even before the founding of group. Indeed, members of Fatah, the dominant faction within the Palestine Liberation

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Crisis: Reasons, Developments and the Effects on Turkey), *Türk Dünyası İncelemeleri Dergisi*, XII/2, 2012, pp. 553 – 578 and Sertif Demir and Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, “An Analysis of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Turkey’s Politic-Military, Social and Economic Security”, *Gazi Akademik Bakış*, XIII/26, 2020, pp. 1-19 and Sertif Demir, “Syrian Refugee Crisis and Turkey”, *Bölgesel Araştırmalar Dergisi*, V/1, 2021, pp. 213-215.

14 Sherifa Zuhur, *Hamas and Israel: Conflicting Strategies of Group-Based Politics*. Institute of Middle Eastern, Islamic and Strategic Studies, 2008, p. 20.

15 Maria Bordas, “Hamas-Israel War: A Brief Analysis of First Two Phases of War”. *European Scientific Journal*, XX/11, 2024, p. 4.

16 Zuhur, *Hamas and Israel...*, p. 20.

Organization (PLO), largely described as secular and leftist, had deep ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, which later founded Hamas.<sup>17</sup> This closeness indicated the presence of religious conservatism within Fatah, which would later materialize in Hamas. On the other hand, the harsh conditions and oppression in the Gaza Strip have led to the adoption of radical ideologies among Palestinians. Hamas has exploited this environment to expand its influence over the Palestinian population.

Beginning in 1987 with the First Intifada, Hamas became a significant element of the Palestinian resistance movement, actively participating in organizing mass protests and demonstrations. Furthermore, Hamas gained the sympathy of the Palestinian people through its charitable activities and its advocacy of armed resistance.<sup>18</sup> This strategy aimed to weaken the power of its rival, the more moderate Fatah. In parallel, Hamas also received substantial foreign support, particularly from Iran, which viewed the group as a useful ally in its efforts to counter Israel.<sup>19</sup>

Remarkably, while there are claims that Israel initially implicitly supported the founding of Hamas as a counterbalance to the secular Fatah,<sup>20</sup> proving such claims is nearly impossible.

Hamas gained power, particularly due to its reputation for integrity and its dedication to addressing the pressing social and economic issues faced by Palestinians. During the period from 1993 to 2000, as the Oslo Accords faltered, Hamas became a refuge for many Palestinians who opposed the peace process.<sup>21</sup> Hamas pioneered all discontented Palestinians and carried out attacks on Israeli civilians and military targets with the establishment of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades starting in 1991.

Hamas also exploited the failure of the Camp David negotiations between Israel and the PA in 2000, coupled with Ariel Sharon's controversial visit to the al-Aqsa Mosque.<sup>22</sup> This set the stage for the Second Intifada, where Hamas played a significantly more prominent role than in the first uprising. The Second Intifada marked a shift from negotiations to armed resistance, with Hamas continuing its campaign of violence against Israel.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Bordas "Hamas-Israel War...", p. 5.

20 Zaki Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of Militants, Martyrs and Spies*, Tauris 2007, p. 87; Azzam Tamini, *Hamas: a history from within*, Olive Branch Press, Northampton, Massachusetts 2007. Both are cited in Bordas "Hamas-Israel War...", p. 7.

21 Zuhur *Hamas and Israel...*, p. 6.

22 Jeremy Pressman, "The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." *Journal of Conflict Studies*, XXVII 2, 2006, pp. 114–115; Daniel L. Byman. *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism*, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 115. Both are cited in Bordas "Hamas-Israel War...", p. 7

From 2005 onwards, Hamas not only confronted Palestinian Authority in Gaza but also mobilized a broad movement among Palestinians against both Israel and Fatah. In this context, Hamas emerged as the primary challenge to Fatah and, more broadly, to the secular nationalist factions<sup>23</sup> which deeply rooted within Palestine since the 1960s. Particularly, after the decline of left-wing thought in the 1990s, political Islamism, which rose to prominence, found its embodiment in Hamas within the Palestinian context.

Israel handed over control of Gaza to the Palestinian Authority in 2005 and withdrew from Gaza Strip. Through withdrawing, Israel aimed to reduce direct attacks against its security forces and to promote peace and development between the two communities.<sup>24</sup> However, after Yasser Arafat's death, his successor Mahmoud Abbas failed to achieve unity within Palestinian society and faced internal divisions. In the 2006 legislative elections in Gaza, Hamas won an overwhelming majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council. This electoral victory deepened the rift between Hamas and Fatah. Having gained legislative power, Hamas consolidated its executive power in 2007 when Hamas militarily seized control of Gaza and brutally executed Fatah members. Thus, Gaza fell into the hands of an organization steeped in radicalism, posing a significant threat to Israeli security.

However, despite becoming a powerful movement during this period, Hamas also had significant weaknesses. Because, despite its popularity in the Palestinians, Hamas lacked the international legitimacy that Fatah possessed. While Fatah accepted the existence of the Israeli state, Hamas embraced a struggle until the destruction of Israel. As a result, Hamas has been designated a terrorist organization by many countries,<sup>25</sup> covering the United States and the European Union.

On the other hand, the rise of radicalism on the Palestinian side has partly contributed to the rise of similar views on the Israeli side. Furthermore, Hamas's increasing power against the Palestinian Authority has become a significant propaganda tool, particularly for right-wing Israeli politics and rhetoric. The Israeli far right frequently uses Hamas's growing power to undermine Palestinian leadership and peace efforts.

## Understanding the causes and motives of the October 7 attack

Hamas emerged as an organization that explicitly rejected Israel's existence and sought to establish an Islamic government in the Palestinian territories.

23 Loren D. Lybarger, *Identity and Religion in Palestine: The Struggle between Islamism and Secularism in the Occupied Territories*, Princeton University Press, 2007, p. 30-32.

24 Hamas-Israel Conflict: Frequently Asked Questions. State of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Updated to 6 December 2023), p. 10.

25 Raz Krauss Peer, *Understanding Israel's War in Gaza*, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, Nov. 2023, p. 4.

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Despite Oslo Accord, Hamas refused to recognize the peace process and continued its armed struggle. During the Second Intifada (2000–2005), Hamas escalated its armed activities in reaction to Israel’s security policies in the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>26</sup>

In 2007, Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip from Fattah through violence and consolidated its authority there. This change of power in Gaza was seen as a threat to Israel and led to inconclusive tensions and clashes between Israel and Hamas. Despite international condemnation,<sup>27</sup> Israel has conducted a series of operations in Gaza to eliminate the Hamas threat, including Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), Operation Pillar of Defence (2012), Operation Protective Edge (2014), and another in 2021.

Prior to Israel’s operation in 2021, there was tensions in the Sheikh Jarrah district of Jerusalem while Palestinians tried to prevent Israeli security forces from intervening against Palestinian protesters at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. To help them, Hamas launched hundreds of rockets at Israel, triggering a full-scale military conflict. Similar escalations also occurred in 2022 and 2023. Overall, there was recurring cycle of rocket fires from Hamas and a retaliation airstrikes from Israel.

On the other hand, international dynamics have also influenced the disagreements between the two communities. Although the US remained steadfast ally of Israel, it acted neutral in few cases towards both sides after the 1990s. However, this policy has changed considerably in recent years. Especially during the Trump era and after the 2023 attack, the US policies have closely aligned with those of Israel. For example, during both terms of President Trump, there was a close alignment between Israeli and US policies. Accordingly, the US recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and subsequently moved its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This US policy completely contradicted the 1967 UN resolution that designated East Jerusalem as Palestinian territory. Similarly, the Trump administration’s recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights was a new US policy that disregarded international law.

Throughout this process, Hamas has faced various aggressive actions stemming from Israeli policies. These include security raids on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and the continued occupation of Palestinian territories.

26 Byman, *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism*, 153-189 cited in Bordas “*Hamas-Israel War...*”.

27 Milton-Edwards and Farrell *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, 99–140; Bordas “*Hamas-Israel War...*”, p. 7.

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Moreover, throughout 2023, increased settler attacks displaced hundreds of Palestinians in the West Bank, fueling tensions between Jewish settlers and Palestinian communities.<sup>28</sup> Concurrently, violent clashes erupted around Al-Aqsa Mosque, intensifying hostility. In September 2023, tensions escalated further when five Palestinians were killed at the Gaza border. Shortly after, Israel imposed an export ban on Gaza, citing intercepted shipments allegedly containing explosives, severely influencing thousands of families dependent on trade. Analyzing these developments, the Washington Post, one of the most respected and reliable newspapers in the US, reported that Israel and Hamas are “on the brink of war.”<sup>29</sup>

In fact, Hamas exhibited unusual behavior in the years leading up to its large-scale attack. Two years prior, it reportedly used hardwired phone lines within its tunnel network to evade Israeli intelligence.<sup>30</sup> During this period, Hamas orchestrated the planning of “Operation Al-Aqsa Flood,”<sup>31</sup> with public videos displaying its militants training for combat. During preparation attack, footage circulated of Hamas members rehearsing hostage-taking and paragliding infiltration techniques. Besides, just weeks before the attack, a video surfaced showing fighters practicing border breaches.<sup>32</sup>

Despite various indicators, Israeli intelligence either failed to detect or misinterpreted the signs of an impending large-scale attack. For instance, the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet), tasked with monitoring Hamas activity in the Gaza Strip, initially believed that Hamas was merely conducting a training exercise.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, it is reported that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) held the view that Hamas had no intention of launching an attack on Israel. In 2022, Unit 8200<sup>34</sup> ceased its surveillance of Hamas communications, deeming it unnecessary. Furthermore, on the morning of 7 October, the unit was not operational near the Gaza border.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, warning messages from first-hand observers along the Gaza border, which highlighted the increasing movement

- 28 The Times of Israel. 2023. “UN Agency Reports Nearly 600 Settler Attacks over Past Six Months.” *The Times of Israel*, July 7, 2023.
- 29 Murphy, et al., “What’s Behind the Violence in Israel and Gaza?”
- 30 Pamela Brown and Zachary Cohen. “Hamas operatives used phone lines installed in tunnels under Gaza to plan Israel attack over 2 years, sources familiar with intelligence say.” *CNN*, 24 Oct. 2023.
- 31 Robert A. Pape and Mohamed Elgohari. *Winning Hearts and Minds: Hamas Propaganda Campaign Post October 7*. Chicago Project on Security and Threats (CPOST), University of Chicago, 14 Dec. 2023.
- 32 Ynetnews. “IDF Uncovers Hamas Document Detailing Plans to Use Paragliders for Attacks.” Ynetnews, 12 Oct. 2023; Lahav Harkov, “Captured Hamas Operative Reveals Paragliding Attack Plan.” *The Times of Israel*, 14 Oct. 2023.
- 33 Bordas “Hamas-Israel War...,” p. 9.
- 34 Unit 8200 is notable and example of the Israeli SIGINT National Unit, which is one of the largest and most secretive branches within the IDF.
- 35 Bordas “Hamas-Israel War...,” p. 9.

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of Hamas forces, were disregarded by senior IDF authorities. Furthermore, Egypt claimed to have warned Israel days before the assault, though Israeli authorities denied receiving such a warning.

Overall, the 7 October attack stemmed from a combination of historical, political, and military factors. The main motivations included increased Israeli military operations in Al-Aqsa Mosque and the West Bank, human rights violations against Palestinians, and the long-term blockade of Gaza.<sup>36</sup> Hamas labelled the assault the "Aqsa Flood," presenting it as a response to violations of Islamic holy sites, particularly Al-Aqsa Mosque.<sup>37</sup>

Militarily, Hamas carefully planned the attack to hide their intentions. According to intelligence report, Hamas had almost 30,000 fighters in Gaza,<sup>38</sup> provided with tunnels, rockets and drone technologies<sup>39</sup> to neutralize Israel's Iron Dome air defense system.<sup>40</sup>

### **The consequences of Hamas's 7 October attack**

Hamas launched an unprecedented, asymmetrical, and highly coordinated attack against Israel on 7 October 2023. This attack is significant for two reasons. First, it was the first ground attack on Israeli territory since the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Second, similar to the timing of the 1973 war, it occurred on a day of great religious significance for Jewish people. According to official reports, the attack resulted in the deaths of approximately 1,200 Israelis and the abduction of more than 250 hostages to Gaza.<sup>41</sup>

Interestingly, the attack took place during a period of political division and escalating internal chaos within Israel. The timing of the attack is also noteworthy because it coincided with a period when prime Minister Netanyahu was at his weakest stance in Israeli domestic politics. This was because Prime Minister Netanyahu had formed a coalition with far-right and ultra-Orthodox groups that held a small majority in the Israeli parliament. To escape corruption charges, Netanyahu proposed a legislative package aimed at restructuring the judicial system in favor of the executive branch. This judicial reform sparked significant public backlash and widespread protests across the

36 Ilan Pappé, *A Very Short History of the Israel–Palestine Conflict* (Oneworld Publications, 2024).

37 Murphy, et al., "What's Behind the Violence in Israel and Gaza?"

38 Adam Goldman, et al. "Hamas's Military Capabilities." *The Washington Post*, 10 Oct. 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/10/10/hamas-military-capabilities/>.

39 *Jane's Defence Weekly*. "Hamas's Military Capabilities in Gaza." 2023; Ronen Bergman and Patrick Kingsley. "Israel's Military Says Hamas Has a Vast System of Tunnels Under Gaza." *The New York Times*, 27 Oct. 2023.

40 Al Jazeera. Hamas attacks Israel: Timeline and key events, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com>.

41 Reuters. "Israel Revises Death Toll from Oct. 7 Hamas Attack to Around 1,200." *Reuters*, 10 Nov. 2023.

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country.<sup>42</sup> The Hamas attack, carrying out during Netanyahu's weakest period, can be considered a good opportunity for him. Because of the Hamas attack, corruption charges were postponed or rendered invalid. Despite internal political turmoil, Israel supported the launched "Operation Iron Sword" by Netanyahu government against Hamas. This counter offensive operation against Hamas and Gaza has had profound political and security consequences on a regional and global scale

### ***Security related consequences***

In light of current available information, it is difficult to understand the rationale behind Hamas's unexpected attack. It is likely that Hamas did not fully assess the potential consequences of launching a large-scale attack that led to the deaths of innocent civilians and the abduction of many hostages. The effect of this attack on Israel was deeply severe and unpredictable. Because, Israel has once more faced an existential threat fifty years after the 1973 Yom Kippur War,

Given these facts, the Hamas attack exposed the limitations of Israel's security strategy and critical weaknesses in Israel's defense infrastructure which includes the use of walls, barbed wire, surveillance, the Iron Dome air defense system, and temporary military actions against Hamas in Gaza.

Additionally, Hamas's attack demonstrated the weaknesses of Israel's ground forces. Because, Hamas had rarely conducted significant operations against Israeli ground forces until this attack. Group generally lacked the ability to launch ground attacks against Israeli forces unless the IDF initiated operations in Gaza. Additionally, suicide attacks, once a defining feature of Palestinian tactics, had been largely neutralized by Israel's tight border controls and military presence. However, with this asymmetric attack, Hamas demonstrated its capacity to directly attack Israeli ground forces. Furthermore, Israel's over-reliance on its advanced technological protection and surveillance systems, and its failure to comprehensively assess threat levels, may also have contributed to Hamas' surprise attack.

Overall, as stated by Hitman,<sup>43</sup> Israel failed to prevent the attack as its intelligence, operational, and political-diplomatic organs seemed in effective. In fact, the deception strategies employed by Hamas were also notably successful, demonstrating the potential gaps in Israel's intelligence acquisition, assessing and dissemination capacity.

42 Peer, *Understanding Israel's War in Gaza*, p. 5.

43 Guy Hitman, "What Went Wrong? Israeli Misconceptions and the October 2023 Surprise", *Middle East Policy*, XXX/2, 2024, pp. 82–94.

In an effort to prevent further attacks from Gaza, Israel launched a comprehensive “overall security strategy”<sup>44</sup> aimed at dismantling northern Gaza, displacing Gazans to Rafah in the southern part of Gaza, and reoccupying Gaza for an indefinite period. Thus, the IDF conducted extensive aerial bombardments of Gaza and prepared for a ground offensive. This strategy also entailed direct Israeli control over the territory, rather than transferring authority to the Palestinian Authority.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, the world witnessed the first instance of digital warfare conducted by Israel, which involved detonating thousands of pagers used by Hezbollah militants. Although Hamas members were not directly targeted, this operation was part of a broader conflict initiated by Israel. Explosives were likely implanted within the battery compartments of the devices before being delivered to Hezbollah. It is probable that all pagers were remotely triggered simultaneously, possibly through a radio signal.

The ongoing conflict has led to “decapitation strikes” targeting high-ranking Hamas and Hezbollah leaders. Israel’s strategy of eliminating Hamas leadership has faced criticism for its ineffectiveness in ending the group’s influence, with claims it fails to diminish their ideological power.<sup>46</sup> Yaoren<sup>47</sup> argued that leadership decapitation alone could not defeat religiously motivated groups, citing how the 2004 killing of Hamas leader Sheikh Yassin escalated violence. Currently, key figures such as Hamas leaders Ismail Haniyeh and Yahya Sinwar, as well as Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, were killed in airstrikes or other way in 2024. These strikes aimed to disrupt command and control by removing influential leaders who helped transform Hamas and Hezbollah into powerful groups capable of large-scale operations.

On the other hand, Israel’s current war represents its longest and most complex conflict since its establishment in 1948.<sup>48</sup> The economic cost of this war reached approximately 69 billion US dollars by May 2024, with the total likely to rise as Israel continues its military operations.<sup>49</sup> The greatest impact of Israel’s airstrikes is seen in civilian deaths and the complete destruction of the Gaza Strip. Such indiscriminate and widespread airstrikes can be characterized

44 M.T. Samuel, “The Israel-Hamas War One Year Later: Mass Violence and Palestinian Dispossession”, *Middle East Policy*, XXX/4, 2024, p. 3-9.

45 Ibid, p. 11

46 Israel’s Decapitation Strategy Is Working, but Comes at a Heavy Cost.” *The Times*, 6 Nov. 2024; Robin Wright, “What Happens to Hamas and Hezbollah Now That Their Leaders Have Been Killed?” *The New Yorker*, 20 Oct. 2024.

47 Kenneth Yeo Yaoren, “Leadership Decapitation and the Impact on Terrorist Groups”, *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, XI/3, 2019, pp. 7-2.

48 Fenella McGerty, “Israel’s Increasing War Costs” *The Israel-Hamas War One Year On*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2024, p. 3.

49 McGerty, “Israel’s Increasing War Costs”, p. 3.

as “collective punishment”, violating international law by targeting all civilians in response to the actions of a particular group.<sup>50</sup>

Accordingly, Hamas’s attack on 7 October 2023 gives rise to complex assessments in terms of warfighting principles, military strategy, geopolitical considerations, and the human cost of war. First, Hamas, operating primarily as a militant and guerrilla force, faced serious consequences for launching an asymmetrical offensive that clearly exceeded its military capacity. Hamas lacked the organization, capacity, and resources necessary to wage conventional warfare against Israel. Not only did it lack the regular army structure required for conventional warfare, but it also lacked the necessary heavy weaponry such as tanks, artillery, and air support. This lack of conventional power limited Hamas’s ability to sustain prolonged conflicts or occupy significant portions of Israeli territory.

Secondly, Hamas appears to have failed to clearly define its war objectives, methods of warfare, and goal. Furthermore, it seems Hamas has not adequately assessed the scale, scope, and nature of potential Israeli retaliation. In addition, Hamas also have failed to asses Israel’s commitment to preserving its territorial integrity and the notably the US support to Israel.

Therefore, Hamas attack on 7 October can be interpreted as an expression of a perceived lack of viable alternatives. Essentially, the ongoing political impasse, and especially the lack of significant progress towards a peace agreement based on the 1967 borders and with Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital, may have driven Hamas into a pessimistic mood. The low probability of such a situation occurring in the near future may have also increased this pessimism. Furthermore, the isolation of Gaza from the outside world, like an open prison, may have triggered the compulsion to act. All of this may have driven Hamas into this metaphorical dilemma of seeking a way to achieve this.

Moreover, Hamas’s decision to launch such an operation may have stemmed from a desire to create a state of “unrest” in Israeli society. As long as peace is not achieved in the Palestinian territories, it is logical for Hamas to fuel feelings of anxiety, fear, and despair in the region and in Israel. The group may have anticipated that by fanning these sentiments, it could create internal pressure within Israel for a government response aimed at ending the conflict. This could be seen as a tactic by Hamas to influence the political climate in line with its own objectives or to pressure Israel to reconsider its stance on peace negotiations.

50 Omar S. McDoom, “Expert Commentary, the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, and the Question of Genocide: Prosemitic Bias within a Scholarly Community?” *Journal of Genocide Research*, XXVI/2, 2024, p. 4.

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Furthermore, Israel's efforts to eliminate Hamas have resulted in significant casualties among innocent Palestinian civilians, creating a major humanitarian tragedy. In this context, this war has highlighted the inherent complexity of urban warfare. Hamas's long-standing strategy of infiltrating civilian areas has been met with indiscriminate counter-attacks from Israel, further complicating the conflict.<sup>51</sup>

Overall, since 7 October, Gaza has been marked not only by the suffering of Palestinians, but also by an unbalanced armed conflict fueled by a genocidal Israeli counter-offensive aimed at systemic collapse. Besides, this conflict will be remembered not only for the Hamas militants and innocent Palestinian civilians killed in Israeli attacks, but also for the numerous Israeli civilian who lost their lives because of Hamas attacks.<sup>52</sup>

### **Political implications**

The attack had significant repercussions in Israeli domestic politics. Thus, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government faced severe criticism for failing to predict the attack. Moreover, this situation sparked widespread public outrage and debate over the possibility of early elections and comprehensive changes to security policies.<sup>53</sup>

The attack has also had profound international repercussions. Hamas's attack was met with widespread condemnation from the international community, which had supported Palestine for decades. Seen as a show of force by Hamas, the attack has severely undermined the hard-won international legitimacy of the Palestinian cause. This situation, in a sense, justified Israel's strong counter-response by providing it with international legitimacy.<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, the Israeli government had been seeking a pretext to justify military action against Hamas and Gaza, partly to shift public attention from domestic political turmoil to concerns about national security. Hamas may have presumed that Israel's response would mirror previous limited operations, underestimating the potential for a more extensive escalation. Additionally, it is plausible that Hamas assumed third-party actors would intervene to prevent Israel from escalating the conflict to the extent of destroying Gaza and a likely forcibly relocating Palestinians, an event that could be likened to a second Nakba.

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- 51 John Spencer, "The IDF Approach to Protecting Civilians in Urban Warfare", *Modern War Institute*, 27 Oct. 2023.
- 52 Max Ajl, "Palestine and the Ends of Theory", *Middle East Critique*, XXXIII/4, 2024, p. 612.
- 53 Haaretz Editorial Board. "Netanyahu Knew. Netanyahu Ignored. Netanyahu Is Responsible." *Haaretz*, 23 Nov. 2023.
- 54 Frank Gardner and Frances Mao. "Israel-Hezbollah Ceasefire Deal Agreed, Confirms Biden." *BBC News*, 27 Nov. 2024.

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In summary, the outcome of this asymmetric attack hardly appears to yield any positive prospects for Palestinians. Instead, it has resulted in immense suffering, a likely displacement, and further destabilization, particularly for the people of Gaza, who endure most of the consequences.

The attack on 7 October occurred within a context of global political distraction, with all major powers—except for the United States—focused on their own priorities. For example, the Russian Federation was engaged in an ongoing war with Ukraine, which had lasted for over four years. Additionally, open-source reports indicated that, one week prior to the attack, Hamas may have discussed the possibility of a coordinated strike with Russia.<sup>55</sup> It is improbable to assert that Russia directly supported such an attack. However, it is plausible that Russia may have anticipated that the attack could shift the focus and support of both the United States and European countries from Ukraine to the Middle East. On the contrary, the most significant consequence of this attack is that Russia's influence in the region has been reduced to almost zero. As for China, although it was considered the world's second-largest power, its post-war image shows that it lacks either that power or the courage to take the necessary steps internationally in a timely manner. Consequently, neither of these two major powers was able to exert sufficient pressure on Israel to prevent further escalation. Furthermore, both the United States and its European allies supported Israel's response to the Hamas attack. Moreover, Israeli indiscriminate attacks were met with weak critiques from the Western states.

The most significant impact of the war has been on Syria and the United States. Before the attack, Iran and Hezbollah have reinforced Assad regime with their forces. However, following Israel's operation against Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon, Hezbollah withdrew most of its forces from Syria. Likewise, Israel also targeted Iranian diplomatic facilities in Damascus, resulting in a series of reciprocal missile and air strikes between the two countries. Furthermore, Russia, preoccupied with the Ukrainian War which it initiated in 2022, was unable to provide the necessary support to the Syrian regime forces.

Israel also targeted Iranian diplomatic facilities in Damascus, resulting in a series of mutual missiles and airstrikes between the two countries. Furthermore, Russia, heavily involved in the ongoing war in Ukraine, was unable to provide the necessary support to the Syrian regime forces. After over a decade of civil war, the Syrian regime forces, fatigued and lacking the resolve to continue fighting were further weakened by the absence of support from Russia, Hezbollah, and Iran. As a result, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) successfully captured Damascus in December 2024, toppling Assad's regime.<sup>56</sup> It is evident

55 Mansur Mirovalev, "Unverified Rumours of Russia Arming Hamas Persist, as War Rages in Gaza." *Al Jazeera*, 14 Nov. 2023.

56 Samuel Altuna and Rania Cabus. *Islamist Reactions to the Fall of the Assad Regime and the Role of HTS*

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that Hezbollah's withdrawal from Syria facilitated HTS's operations, which ultimately led to the ousting of the Assad regime.

On the American front, first Biden administration and later Trump administration provided unwavering support to Israel, offering economic and military aid, diplomatic protection, and repeatedly vetoing United Nations resolutions critical of Israeli actions. This support extended to legitimizing Israeli military operations on global platforms. The American administration also made unsuccessful efforts to prevent the International Court of Justice from issuing an advisory opinion that declared Israel's military occupation of Palestinian territories, including Gaza, to be unlawful.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, Biden and his Vice President Kamala Harris's steadfast support for Israel, grounded in the rhetoric of protecting Jews from genocidal antisemitism and Biden's personal faith in Zionism,<sup>58</sup> culminated in a significant political cost. In the 2024 presidential election, this stance alienated key voting blocs, particularly Arab-American and Latino communities, leading to a loss of their support.<sup>59</sup>

The outcome of the recent conflict can largely be traced to the escalating hostilities between Iran and Israel, culminating in a series of missile exchanges and retaliatory airstrikes. While both sides adopted a cautious approach in the initial attacks, Iran's subsequent attacks were strategically targeted. After neutralizing Iranian proxy forces in the region, in response, Israel launched an operation on 13 June 2025, directly targeting Iran's top military and civilian leadership as well as nuclear facilities. Likewise, Iran retaliated by launching precision-guided missile attacks on strategic targets within Israel. This situation triggered a ten-day war between Israel and Iran, in which the United States also became involved.

Despite efforts to neutralize Iran's air defense capabilities, Iran overcame Israel's Iron Dome defense system using high-precision long-range missiles and directly struck Israeli territory. The Iranian missile attacks brought life in Israel to a near standstill for almost a week. This was a historic turning point, as Iran, a state outside of Israel's borders, directly targeted Israeli military and economic facilities with strategic missiles. Finally, believing that the airstrikes would delay Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons by at least five years, the US and Israel agreed to a ceasefire. However, this ceasefire can be seen more as preparation for future conflicts than as an initiative aimed at peace.

From the outset, Israel's actions, particularly the demolition of settlements in northern Gaza, demonstrated its intention to expel Palestinians

*in Syria's Post-Revolutionary Landscape*. George Washington University, 2024.

57 Samuel, "The Israel-Hamas War One Year Later...", p. 7.

58 Ibid, p. 8.

59 Ibid, p. 7.

from Gaza. Following objections from the Biden administration, Netanyahu appeared to back down from the idea of forcibly removing Palestinians from Gaza. However, under the Trump administration, Netanyahu insisted on the relocation of Palestinians from Gaza to Jordan, Egypt, or any suitable location in Africa. While Trump initially seemed to accept this “dispossession” policy,<sup>60</sup> he appears to have abandoned the policy of forced expulsion during the ceasefire negotiations in October 2025. Instead, if possible, a policy of voluntary displacement seems to be the goal.

On the other hand, following the violence against civilians during the war, the International Criminal Court (ICC) launched investigations into possible war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law, based on the Hamas and Israeli acts in conflict.<sup>61</sup> The ICC, based on evidence, ruled that there were “reasonable grounds” to hold Israeli officials criminally responsible for the crime of deliberately targeting the civilian population through land grabbing.<sup>62</sup> The actions against civilians were deemed a violation of the United Nations Convention on Genocide. In this context, the ICC issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Gallant for their involvement in the mass violence in Gaza, which constituted a violation of the United Nations Convention on Genocide.<sup>63</sup> This was, in fact, the first instance of an international court issuing arrest warrants against Israeli officials, despite strong opposition from the United States.

As for the humanitarian casualty, there was humanitarian tragedy in region. Until the ceasefire in 2025, over 68,000 Palestinians have been killed, more than 170,000 wounded, and hundreds of thousands displaced, and much of Gaza’s infrastructure decimated.<sup>64</sup> The Israeli blockade on Gaza has exacerbated the crisis, limiting access to essential supplies such as electricity, water, and food. Efforts by international aid organizations to deliver humanitarian assistance have been hampered by security concerns and logistical challenges.<sup>65</sup> Employing the large-scale destruction of housing, health and educational infrastructure, the impeding of relief supplies by Israel is depicted as “collective punishment”.<sup>66</sup>

Following a period of intense escalation, the second ceasefire agreement was reached just before the conclusion of President Biden’s term on 20 January 2025. This ceasefire remained fragile. The initial agreement provided

60 Samuel, “The Israel-Hamas War One Year Later...”, p. 11.

61 ICC. Investigation into War Crimes in Gaza and Israel, 2023.

62 Samuel, “The Israel-Hamas War One Year Later...”, p. 14.

63 Ibid.

64 OCHA. Reported impact snapshot, Gaza Strip , 8 April 2025.

65 Amnesty International, 2025.

66 Daniela Huber, *Israel/Palestine and the Normative Power of the “Global South”*. IAI Commentaries 24/14, Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2024.

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for the release of hostages and prisoners, generating hope for a sustainable peace. However, Israel recommenced its operation at end of March 2025 after gaining the Trump's full support. Finally, a cease fire plan accepted by warring parties on 9 October 2025, initiated by the US, Katar, Egypt and Turkiye

Without a comprehensive peace agreement that meets the expectations of both parties, hostilities between the two sides are likely to persist in the future. Israel perceives its current geopolitical position as historically advantageous, given the collapse of the Ba'ath regime in Syria, the weakening of both Hamas and Hezbollah, Iran's growing regional isolation and diminishing influence in the Middle East, and the strong support of a resolute U.S. President, Donald Trump.

### ***Ceasefire Process, Prisoner Exchange, and International Stabilization Force Initiative***

Following Israel's two-year heavy bombardment and occupation of Gaza, resulting in a humanitarian tragedy, Western states began to react against Israel's occupation and aggression. Accordingly, some Western states, including the UK, Spain, and France, began to recognize an independent Palestinian state and pressured Israel to accept a ceasefire. Furthermore, peaceful groups within Israel and the families of hostages also exerted pressure on the Israeli government. Seeing that world public opinion was turning against Israel, the US also pressured Israel, securing a comprehensive ceasefire agreement between the parties by 9 October 2025. The ceasefire process was made possible through multilateral negotiations led by the US, Egypt, and Qatar, with the participation of Türkiye.

The first phase of the ceasefire agreement stipulated the reciprocal return of all Israeli prisoners held by Hamas (including the bodies of those who died) and the bodies of Palestinian prisoners who died in Israeli prisons, as well as a certain number of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. It was also agreed that Israel would withdraw its forces to the designated area in Gaza. The ceasefire agreement also included provisions for temporary administration and the presence of an international stabilization force in Gaza to monitor the peace process. Despite some violations of the ceasefire, the two-year war appears to be over for now.<sup>67</sup>

The United States, which spearheaded the peace process to gain economic advantages in the region, brought the matter to the UN Security Council. On 17 November, the UN Security Council approved a twenty-point peace plan for the Gaza Strip prepared by the US.<sup>68</sup> The resolution authorizes the

67 Mariel Ferragamo, A Guide to the Gaza Peace Deal, *Foreign Affairs* 19 November 2025.

68 Ibid.

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United States to implement parts of the peace plan. This includes the establishment of the International Stabilization Force (ISF), a multinational military organization to monitor security in the region. The resolution also aims for the Palestinian Authority (PA) to create a committee to oversee security and the political transition in Gaza by the end of 2027.<sup>69</sup>

The most notable elements of the ceasefire process are the agreement to deploy ISF to the Gaza Strip and to establish a temporary international administration. This development is historic because it marks the first time Gaza has become directly part of an international security mechanism.

In fact, the second phase of the US-led Gaza ceasefire agreement was accepted by Hamas on 15 January 2026. The agreement publicized the transfer of governing authority in Gaza from Hamas to a 15-member Palestinian technocratic body, referred to as the "Peace Board," which would function under the overarching supervision of US President Donald Trump.<sup>70</sup> This arrangement is designed as a transitional governance mechanism intended to stabilize Gaza's political and administrative structures in the post-conflict period.

The demilitarization of Gaza and the disarmament of Hamas constitute the core components of the agreement. In light of Hamas's significant degradation in military capabilities, the organization appears increasingly amenable to disarmament under defined conditions. These include the dismantlement of weapons infrastructure—most notably tunnel networks and arms production facilities—the surrender of heavy weapon systems such as rockets, missiles, and RPGs, and the creation of a Gaza police force operating under the authority of the technocratic administration. This force would be tasked with maintaining internal security and exercising an exclusive monopoly over the legitimate use of force.<sup>71</sup>

To facilitate Israel's phased military withdrawal, the agreement envisages the deployment of an International Security Force (ISF) in areas of Gaza that remain under Israeli control. The ISF would operate under the mandate of the interim technocratic administration. Additionally, a likely amnesty program is also foreseen targeting Hamas operatives willing to surrender individual weapons and formally renounce participation in armed activities,<sup>72</sup> thereby reinforcing the broader demobilization and reintegration framework.

However, the ceasefire does not mean the end of the conflict. A detailed peace plan, requiring the approval of both sides, is needed, addressing funda-

69 Ibid.

70 Barak Ravid, U.S. thinks Hamas is ready to demilitarize as Gaza deal moves to "phase two", <https://www.axios.com/2026/01/15/hamas-demilitarize-gaza-deal-phase-two>

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

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mental issues such as Gaza's future governance structure, Hamas's political and military position, the potential role of the Palestinian Authority, and the reconstruction of Gaza. Likewise, the disarming of Hamas and demilitarization of Gaza is particularly sensitive in this process as some Hamas leaders deny such proposals.

Although forced displacement has not been mentioned in cease-fire agreements, however, it is safe to say that Israel and the Trump administration keep in mind that their goal is to ensure the displacement of Palestinians from Gaza in anyway.

In the aftermath of the cessation of hostilities that was facilitated by Donald Trump in October 2025, an international transitional mechanism was established under the auspices of the United States. This mechanism, formally known as the "Gaza Peace Board," was conceived with the objective of facilitating a peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflict in Gaza. In January 2026, following an invitation, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, and Pakistan consented to join the board, while Kuwait, Bahrain, Morocco, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan became supporting members, providing financial resources. At the inaugural meeting held in Washington in February 2026, it was reported that these countries collectively pledged approximately \$7 billion in reconstruction funds, while the US announced a contribution of \$10 billion<sup>73</sup>. According to reports within this framework, Qatar and Saudi Arabia each pledged \$1 billion, while the United Arab Emirates pledged approximately \$1.2 billion.<sup>73</sup>

However, this board was highly criticized as threatening a multilateral resolution process intertwined in the UN Security Council. US-centric structure and decision-making process could undermine existing international frameworks for conflict resolution and marginalize the role of regional stakeholders.<sup>74</sup> Perception is that the nations that may feel cautious regarding Trump's policies have joined this board

Accordingly, the establishment of a United States-backed International Stabilization Force in Gaza was planned to provide security. Indonesia, Morocco, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, and Albania consented to deploy troops, while Egypt and Jordan declared their intention to support the training of Palestinian security forces.<sup>75</sup> However, the plan's implementation was hindered by Hamas's

73 Reuters. 19 February 2026. "Trump to Preside over First 'Board of Peace' Meeting with Gaza Reconstruction Funding Pledges." Anadolu Agency. 20 February 2026. "Gulf Countries Pledge Billions for Gaza Reconstruction under US-Backed Peace Board."

74 Kristina Daugirdas & Katerina Linos, "Trump's Board of Peace: America's Worst Coalition of the Willing," Lawfare, 10 February 2026.

75 Reuters. March 2026. "Countries Consider Contributing Troops to US-Backed Gaza Stabilization Force."

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reluctance to acquiesce to the stipulated terms of disarmament, as well as by Israel's persistent military occupation of regions within Gaza. As of beginning of April 2026, the cessation of hostilities in Gaza remains in effect, albeit with a gradual reconstruction process and the absence of a fully established transitional government. During this period, it was also reported that more than 36,000 Palestinians were displaced in the West Bank due to settlement expansion and security operations.<sup>76</sup>

## Conclusion

This study examines the fundamental causes and consequences of Hamas's 7 October attack. At the outset, the attack appeared to represent a significant success for Hamas, as it constituted the first direct assault on Israeli territory since 1973 and was carried out on a day of profound religious significance for the Jewish people.

Hamas had multiple motivations for initiating such a conflict. At the time, unresolved political, religious, and military tensions in the region had reached a critical point. In particular, Israel's expansion of settlement policies in Palestinian territories, restrictions imposed on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the ongoing blockade of Gaza constituted key factors that contributed to the launch of the operation. This study argues that, without dismissing these underlying realities, Hamas likely initiated the conflict based on the perception that there were no viable alternatives remaining.

Despite the initial success of executing an unpredictable attack, the overall impact and consequences of this asymmetric warfare have been entirely contrary to Hamas's expectations. Since 7 October, Hamas has lost key leaders, seen its war-fighting capacity severely degraded, and witnessed the weakening of its principal allies due to sustained Israeli targeting. These included the near-total destruction of Gaza, the death and injury of many Palestinian civilians, the likely demilitarization of Gaza, a likely disarmament of Hamas, the termination of Hamas's control over Gaza, and an increased risk of induced displacement of the Gazan population. As the US and Israel continue to demand Hamas's disintegration and disarmament as prerequisites for lasting peace, the group is increasingly being pressured to relinquish both its weapons and its governing authority in Gaza. Furthermore, the repercussions of the war significantly reshaped regional geopolitics, eroding existing power centers and creating new geopolitical advantages for Israel.

Under these circumstances, it cannot be argued that the situation of Hamas—or that of the people of Gaza—has improved compared to the period

76 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 17 March 2026. "West Bank Displacement and Settlement Expansion Report."

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before the conflict. This deterioration is most evident in the humanitarian and geopolitical consequences of the war.

Overall, Hamas's attack on 7 October 2023, followed by Israel's prolonged and intensive bombardment and occupation of Gaza, has fundamentally altered the political balance in the Middle East. In this context, the Israel–Hamas conflict has transformed regional dynamics and prompted a re-assessment of security policies and military strategies across the region. Israel currently perceives its geopolitical position as historically advantageous, due to the collapse of the Ba'ath regime in Syria, the weakening of Hamas and Hezbollah, Iran's growing regional isolation and declining influence, the diminishing presence of Russian power in the Middle East, and the strong backing of a determined U.S. President, Donald Trump.

The recent ceasefire, achieved through the mutual release of prisoners and detainees and the deployment of an international stabilization force in Gaza, represents an important milestone. Nevertheless, this development has provided only temporary stability and has not resolved the underlying political and structural causes of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. In light of these outcomes, the prospects for lasting peace remain uncertain. Without a comprehensive peace agreement that addresses the core expectations of both parties, the continuation of hostilities appears likely.<sup>77</sup>

Consequently, the deep mistrust between the parties and the structural fragmentation in Palestinian politics create uncertainty about whether this process will lead to lasting peace. Viewing the experience in Afghanistan, it is crucial to remember that a well-defined, comprehensive peace is necessary to prevent the emergence of a renewed and widespread resistance movement.<sup>78</sup>

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77 Peer, *Understanding Israel's War in Gaza*, p. 5.

78 Mahmood Monshipouri. "Lessons for Israel's Gaza War in America's Strategic Blunders", *Middle East Policy*, XXXI, 2024, pp. 3-18.

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