The question of recognizing Palestine as a State

Key Words

Arab League (League of Arab States) – organization with the same mission as the United Nations, promotes peace, security and stability by preventing conflict, resolving disputes and acting in the name of solidarity and unity

Hamas – is an Islamic resistance movement, a militant group or even described as a terrorist organization

ICC – the International Criminal Court is an intergovernmental organization and international tribunal; it is not a part of United Nations but sometimes cooperates with them (please note that it is not ratified by all the United Nations' members)

ICJ – the International Court of Justice is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations who provides the advisory opinion on legal matters for other United Nations' organs

Intifada – the Palestinian uprising against Israel

League of Nations (1920-1946) – was the first intergovernmental organization established "to promote international cooperation and to achieve international peace and security", it could be viewed as the "predecessor" of the United Nations

OIC – the Organization of Islamic cooperation is the second-largest intergovernmental body after the United Nations, representing Muslim nations
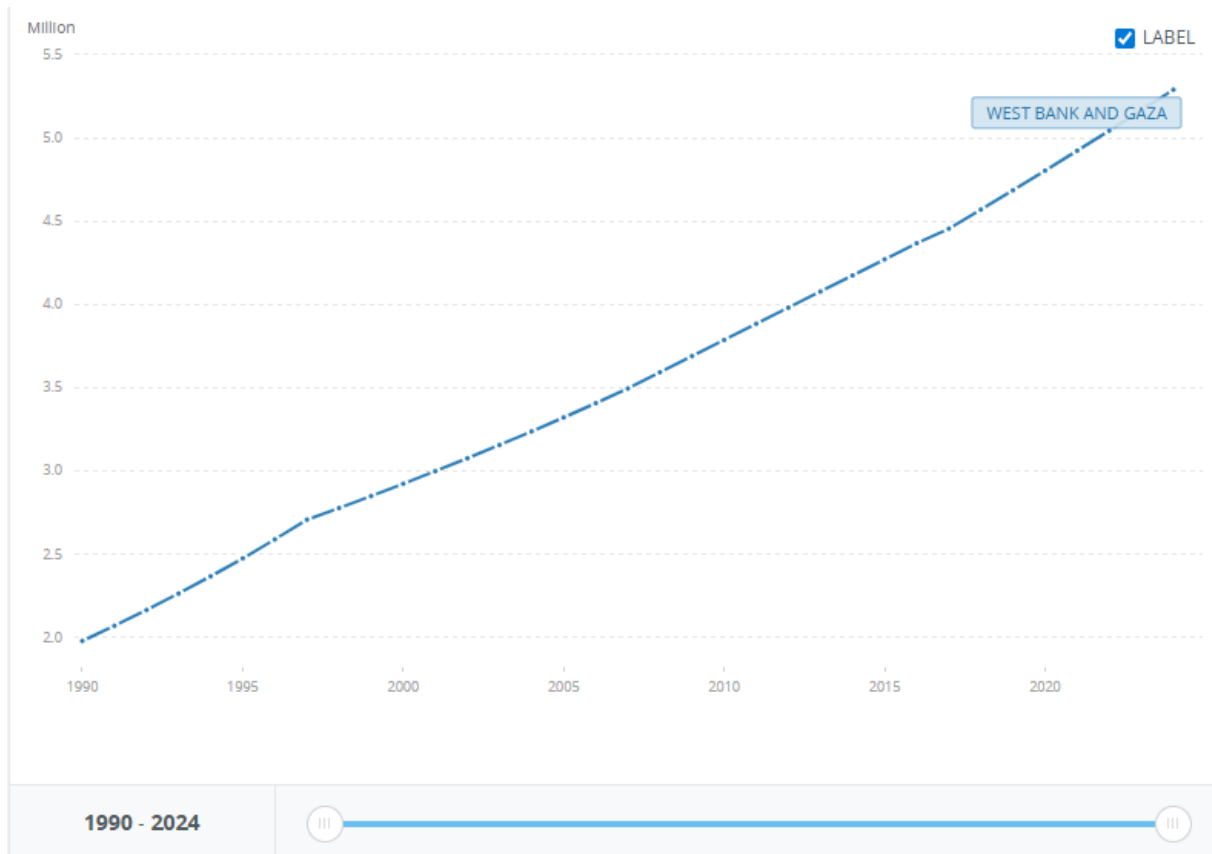
PLO – the Palestine Liberation Organization is an umbrella group formed to represent Palestinian people and achieve statehood

UN – the United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945 to maintain world peace, foster friendly relations, promote social progress, human rights, and international cooperation

Background Information

I.

Palestine is located in the region of Southwest Asia next to the Mediterranean Sea. Its territory has changed over the period of time. At this moment, Palestine is not officially recognized as a State by all the countries but by those who do recognize Palestine, they determine the territory of Palestine as West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip.

Population over the recent years – West Bank and Gaza
(https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=PS)

II.

The question of Palestinian statehood predates the UN; it comes to light after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the World War I. From the beginning it came with tension. In 1922 the League of Nations has placed Palestine under UK administration. All of territories which formerly belonged to the Ottoman Empire eventually became independent States except Palestine. To add more to the tension, the Balfour Declaration of 1917 which promised a "national home for Jewish people in Palestine" was embodied by the British Mandate and that led to large-scale Jewish immigration from 1922 to 1947.

Palestinian rebellion in 1937, escalating violence and terrorism from both sides in the following years has led the UK to refer the issue over to the newly formed UN.

In 1947 the UN has proposed the termination of British Mandate and the partition of Palestine into two independent States, this is known as Resolution 181 (II) or as the Partition plan. One of the two States would be Palestinian Arab, the other Jewish and Jerusalem under international administration.

Jewish leadership had accepted the plan and in May 1948, after the British Mandate has ended, Israel has declared independence. This has led to a war after which Israel has gained control over territory larger than the UN Partition plan, Arab state did not come to existence at all and instead the rest of the territory, Gaza Strip and West Bank, was

controlled by Jordan and Egypt. Also, the first large-scale displacement of Palestinian refugees happened, today it is known as Nakba ("catastrophe").

In 1967 another war broke out in which Israel occupied the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem. War has caused the second exodus of Palestinians. However, Security Council Resolution 242 from 1967 has called for negotiated peace and for Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. This was followed by Security Council Resolution 338 which also called for peace negotiations.

In 1974 the UN General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national sovereignty and to return and has granted the PLO observer status.

In 1987 a mass uprising against the Israeli occupation, known as "Intifada", begins and results in heavy injuries and deaths.

In 1988 the PLO emerges as the recognized representative of the Palestinian people and declares the State Palestine.

In 1993 the PLO and Israel sign the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, also known the Oslo accords establishing the Palestinian Authority and limited self-governance. But borders, Jerusalem, refugees and other issues remain unresolved.

In 2000 the second intifada has taken place, and Israel began construction of a West Bank separation wall, ruled illegal in ICJ.

In 2012 Palestine was granted non-member observer State status in the UN.

Recently the question of recognizing Palestine as a State has been gaining more attention, especially with ongoing war between Palestine and Israel happening in Gaza Strip. In 2023 Israel launched the Gaza war following Hamas attack on October 7th.

In 2024 the ICJ has declared Israeli occupation unlawful and in 2025 the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel has issued a report stating that Israel has committed genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

III.

Recognition of Palestine as a State would strengthen its sovereignty and international legal status, although full recognition by all countries is not required for statehood under international law. Statehood does not automatically eliminate external interference, but it enhances a state's ability to exercise authority over its internal affairs.

The criteria for statehood include a permanent population, a defined territory, an effective government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other States. A State has the right to exercise jurisdiction and control over a defined territory and population.

As a State, Palestine would possess the right to self-determination and would be subject to the rights and obligations of international law, including the restrictions on the use of force under the United Nations Charter.

<u>United Nations Involvement</u>

The UN has played a pivotal role; the most important actions are:

- Resolution 181 (II): Partition Plan (1947) - https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/a-res-181-ii.php
- Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) - https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/90717?v=pdf
- Security Council Resolution 338 (1973) - https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/93466?v=pdf
- Resolution 67/19: accepting Palestine as non-member observer State and by that allowing Palestine to join international treaties, bodies and the ICC (2012) - https://docs.un.org/en/a/res/67/19
- Security Council Resolution 2334: reaffirming that Israeli settlements in "Palestinian territory occupied since 1967" have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law (2016) - https://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/SRES2334-2016.pdf

<u>Bloc Positions</u>

The question of recognizing Palestine as a State could be divided into two main blocks, States who do support its recognition or those who do not.

Or into multiple blocks:

The Arab League and OIC: are strongly advocating for recognition of Palestine as a State (Algeria, Somalia, Pakistan, …)

Some of European countries that have recognized the State of Palestine: United Kingdom, Portugal, France, Malta, Belgium, Spain, Ireland, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Russia, …

Some of European countries that do not recognize the State of Palestine: Greece (historically pro-Palestinian, nowadays strengthening ties with Israel…), Denmark, …

Non European countries who do recognize Palestine as a State: China (in 1988 has officially recognized the state of Palestine), Guyana, Sierra Leone, …

Non European countries who do not recognize Palestine as a State: South Korea (supports a two-state solution and voted in favor of granting Palestine full UN membership), Panama (strong ties with Israel…), United States (don't currently

recognize the State of Palestine, usually sides with Israel, right now focused on ending the Gaza conflict), …

It is highly advised to find out your country's stance on this question and their reasoning.

Questions to Consider

When writing your Position Papers and Resolutions, concentrate on the following questions:

- What are the legal criteria for statehood under international law, and does Palestine meet them?
- Should the UN prioritize negotiated peace agreements between Israel and Palestine over recognition of statehood?
- How does existing UN recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer State affect its legal status?
- To what extent can Palestine exercise effective governmental control?
- What is the significance of Palestine's status as a non-member observer State within the UN system?
- How could recognition influence the protection of human rights and governance in the Palestinian territories?

When doing your research, concentrate on researching information that is relevant to your country. You will need to have a firm understanding of your country's policy towards issues which are valid today. However, it is important to get acquainted with the country's past policy towards the problem, seeing that there could be some sort of connection to be made. Also, it is highly advised to find out about your country's relation with other countries and about their perspective on issues.

Some Useful Links and Sources

https://www.un.org/unispal/

https://www.un.org/unispal/history/

https://www.un.org/unispal/historical-timeline/

https://www.un.org/unispal/document/remarks-sg-oic-jerusalem-conference-09jul25/

https://www.un.org/unispal/un-system/

https://www.un.org/unispal/data-collection/security-council/

https://unric.org/en/recognition-of-palestine-a-long-history/

https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/04/1148351

https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/israel-has-committed-genocide-gaza-strip-un-commission-finds