

Israel-Hamas conflict: Violence in Gaza strip

What is the issue?

\n\n

The sudden flare-up in Gaza between Palestinian militant groups and Israel is another grim reminder that the situation in the blockaded Mediterranean strip remains precarious.

\n\n

Why Israel and Palestine are fighting?

\n\n

- \n
 - Though both Jews and Arab Muslims date their claims to the land back a couple thousand years, the current political conflict began in the early 20th century.
 - \n
 - Jews fleeing holocaust in Europe wanted to establish a national homeland in what was then an Arab and Muslim majority territory in the Ottoman Empire.
 - \n
 - However, the Arabs resisted, seeing the land as rightfully theirs.
 - \n
 - An early United Nations plan to give each group part of the land failed, and Israel and the surrounding Arab nations fought several wars over the territory.
 - \n
 - Today's lines largely reflect the outcomes of two of the wars waged in 1948 and in 1967.
 - \n
 - The 1967 war is particularly important for today's conflict, as it left Israel in control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, two territories home to large Palestinian populations.
 - \n
 - But the violence continued and hence a two-state solution to create an independent Israel and Palestine was proposed as the mainstream approach in resolving the conflict.
 - \n
 - The 1993 Oslo Accords marked the first time that the State of Israel and the

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) formally recognized one another and publicly committed to negotiate a solution to their decades-long conflict.

\n

- However, two-state vision requires Israel to abandon its opposition of Palestinian claims (to national sovereignty).

\n

- Ever since the Oslo Accords, giving statehood to the Palestinians has been the bedrock of any proposal to solve the conflict as it is considered the internationally acknowledged solution.

\n

\n\n

What is the latest round of violence?

\n\n

\n

- The latest violence was triggered by a botched spy operation by Israeli commandos inside Gaza that killed seven Palestinians, including a Hamas military commander.

\n

- Fatah is the largest faction of the multi-party Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) closely identified with the leadership of its founder Yasser Arafat.

\n

- Hamas is a Palestinian Sunni-Islamic fundamentalist organization.

\n

- In the 2006 parliamentary election, Fatah lost its majority in the Palestinian parliament to Hamas.

\n

- This led to a conflict between Fatah and Hamas, with Fatah retaining control of the Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank, while Hamas dominated Gaza.

\n

- Both organizations are Sunni Muslim and both are pledged to restore to the Islamic rule in Palestine.

\n

- Their fundamental disagreement is over the strategy for achieving this common purpose, i.e. Fatah believes more in peaceful process, whereas Hamas wants to resort to violence.

\n

- Thus, Hamas and Islamic Jihad fired hundreds of rockets and mortar shells into Israel in retaliation against the recent attacks.

\n

- Israel responded with airstrikes and artillery fire, hitting scores of military

posts and weapons depots across Gaza.

\n

- They levelled television and radio stations as well as Hamas's military intelligence headquarters.
- This was the heaviest Israeli attack since the 2014 war on the impoverished enclave of 1.82 million people.
- In past wars, Israel inflicted enormous havoc on the enclave's public infrastructure and caused high human casualties, while in retaliation Hamas fired rockets into Israel's civilian areas.
- Israel has also imposed a land, sea and air blockade on the region in a bid to stop Hamas from amassing more weapons and to weaken its hold over the strip.
- But Hamas continues to control Gaza, having found multiple ways to smuggle in weapons, while ordinary Gazans bear the brunt of the blockade.
- The administration has no control on exports or imports, and is not even paying full salaries to government employees.
- Hence Gaza is staring at the prospect of a fourth war in a decade against Israel.

\n

\n\n

What should be done?

\n\n

\n

- The situation has been particularly tense in recent months.
- In March 2018, thousands of Palestinians marched towards the border, demanding their right to return to the homes whom were expelled after the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948, immediately after the creation of the state of Israel.
- This is at the backdrop of Israel steadily expanded the settlements in the West Bank over the years, thus effectively killing the two-state solution.

\n

\n\n



\n\n

\n

- About 750,000 Palestinians were estimated to have been forced out of their homes during the 1948 war.

\n

- The March of Return protests continued on the border since then, and have often been met with live bullets fired by Israeli soldiers.

\n

- Since March, at least 200 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli soldiers and thousands of others wounded.

\n

- This made Egypt and Qatar to step in, offering to mediate talks and provide much-needed resources to the enclave.

\n

- Israel initially responded positively, letting fuel tanks and Qatari money into Gaza.

\n

- This should have set the stage for further dialogue, but Israel's undercover mission inside the enclave sabotaged it, triggering the current crisis.

\n

- Even after both sides announced a ceasefire, violence on the border continued, underscoring how dangerous the situation is.

\n

- Hence they should restrain themselves, allowing peace efforts led by Egypt to continue.

\n

- Sufficient wars have been fought between the two sides over the course of history and hence Gaza currently needs aid, not another war.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n\n

\n

