Israel Palestine Conflict

Why in news?

Recently Hamas, a Palestinian militant group launched a surprise attack on Israel which has led to the outbreak of war between Israel and Palestine.

Disputed Territories
• **Gaza Strip** - Home to about 2 million Palestinians, many of them displaced after leaving or being driven from Israel during the War of Independence. • **West Bank**- About 3 million Palestinians live there, most of them Muslim Arabs. It contains a number of Jewish holy sites, which are visited by thousands of pilgrims every year. • **East Jerusalem-** Jerusalem itself is a divided, disputed city. It was cut in two after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. • Israel controlled the western portion and Jordan controlled the east. Israel captured the entire city in the 1967 Six-Day War.
City of Jerusalem
• **Abrahamic religions**- Jerusalem and the areas surrounding it hold importance for 3 major Abrahamic religions - Judaism - Islam and - Christianity • **Western Wall**- The old city of Jerusalem is home to the Western Wall or Wailing Wall, part of the retaining wall of a hill known as Temple Mount, which is sacred to Judaism and Christianity. • **Jewish faith**- The Wall is the closest that Jews are allowed to get to the Temple Mount platform, and is the most sacred place in the Jewish faith. • **Al Aqsa-** The Western Wall forms a part of the border of the Al Aqsa compound within which is the mosque that stands at the site from where the Prophet is believed to have ascended to paradise. • It is considered as the 3rd holiest site in Islam, after the mosques in Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia.

What is the history of Israel Palestine conflict?

- **World War I-** Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire home to Arab Muslims, Arab Christians and Jewish communities.
- In the war, Ottoman Empire fell and the League of Nations mandated Britain to govern Palestine.
- It led to increase in Jewish immigration which fuelled tensions between Jewish settlers and Arab Palestinian population.
- **Balfour declaration-** It was issued by the British government in 1917 that endorsed the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. It led to an influx of Jewish immigrants to the region.

- **World War II-** The support for a Jewish nation grew significantly in the aftermath of World War II, as the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust of Jewish people came to be fully known.
- **UN Partition plan**- Due to challenges in governing colonies, British handed over the Palestine to UN.
- The partition plan by UN in *1947,* recommended separate Jewish and Arab states. It was accepted by Jewish leaders but rejected by the Arab leaders.



What is the situation after the independence of Israel?

- **Arab Israeli war 1948**- Israel declared statehood in 1948 leading to invasion by neighbouring Arab states (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria).
- It resulted in Israeli survival and signing of ***Armistice Agreements*** with territorial changes.
- The territory was divided into 3 parts
    - The Jewish Israel
    - The Arab West Bank
    - Gaza Strip
- The agreement established temporary borders between Israel and neighbouring Arab states.
    - West Bank- It was *controlled by Jordan.*
    - Gaza Strip- It was *administered by Egypt*
- **Suez crisis 1956-** Israel, France and UK launched a military campaign against Egypt over nationalisation of Suez Canal.
- During this period, *Israel captured Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip* but withdrew under international pressure in 1957.
- **1967 Six day war**- Israel gained territory including *Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights (Syria)*.
- **1973 Yom Kippur War-** Also known as October War, it began with the surprise attack by Egypt and Syria on Israel during Yom Kippur, the holiest and most solemn day in the Jewish calendar.
- **Camp David Accords 1978 -** It established the *"Framework for Peace in the Middle East"* and brought about the end of simmering conflict between Egypt and Israel.

Egypt became the 1st Arab country to conclude a peace treaty with Israel.



What about the Intifadas?

- Intifada (*uprising or shaking off* in Arabic) refers to sustained period of Palestinian resistance and protest against Israeli occupation and policies.
- **First Intifadas (1987-1993)-** It used civil disobedience and non-violent resistance, leading to international sympathy and recognition.
- **Oslo accords**- It was the first direct Palestinian- Israeli peace agreement.

    - **Oslo I (1993)-** It established the *Palestinian Legislative Council* and set the parameters for the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza over a 5 year period.
    - **Oslo II (1995)-** It included discussion of the future governance of the city of Jerusalem.
- ***Two state solution*** is the proposed framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by establishing two states for two peoples.
    - Israel for the Jewish people and Palestine for the Palestinian people.
    - In 1993, the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) agreed on a plan to implement this as part of the Oslo Accords, leading to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority.
- **Second Intifadas (2000-2005)-** It began after former PM of Israel, Ariel Sharon's visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.
- It involved violent acts like suicide bombings and clashes, causing causalities and damages in the West Bank and Gaza.

What peace initiatives were endorsed in 2000s?

- **Arab Peace Initiative (2002)**- Arab league endorsed a Saudi Arabia proposal to establish normal relations with Israel in exchange for an independent Palestinian state.
- It includes
    - Withdrawal of Israel from the territories it had occupied in 1967, including the Golan Heights,
    - Settlement of the Palestinian refugee question,
    - Recognition of East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestinian state.
- **Abraham Accord**- It was signed in 2020 by UAE, Bahrain and Israel mediated by USA to normalise ties between Arab Gulf states and Israel.
- **Middle East Peace Plan**- Also called as the "Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People", it was announced by USA in 2020.
- It didn't materialise as there were difference of opinions.

What was the recent conflict?

- **Hamas**- It is the *largest Palestinian militant group* formed during first Intifada**.**
- Founded in 1987
- It has *controlled Gaza* since winning elections in 2006, then wresting militarily control from another leadership group in 2007.
- It is committed to the destruction of Israel and is considered a *terrorist group* by the U.S., the U.K. and other nations.

ATTACKS ON GAZA	
Operation Cast Lead (2008)	• In the Gaza war or Operation Cast Lead, Israel launched a widespread aerial bombing campaign, targeting more than 100 locations in the densely-populated Gaza Strip.

Operation Pillar of Defense (2012)	• In 2012, Israel killed Ahmed Jabari, chief of Hamas' military wing in Gaza, in a targeted air strike. • Hamas responded by firing a barrage of rockets at nearby Israeli towns. • Israel then embarked on an 8 day military offensive on Gaza called Operation Pillar of Defense.
Operation Protective Edge (2014)	• Israel's Operation Protective Edge was launched with extensive air raids and artillery strikes on the Gaza. • The Israeli military launched a ground invasion of Gaza, saying it aimed to stop rocket fire and destroy tunnels leading into Israel.

- **2023 war-** The Hamas group launched surprise attack on Israel on October 7, 2023.
- Reasons-
  - No movement on the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace talks for several years now
  - Israeli government has talked of allowing the expansion of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land, and of the possibility of annexing part of the West Bank
  - Growing perception in Palestinian society that Israel's diplomatic recognition and political acceptance is on the rise

What is India's stand on Israel Palestine conflict?

- **Post-independence**- Both Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi vowed to support the Palestinian cause as they rejected the idea of two nations on the basis of religion.
- **Regarding Israel-** India announced its recognition of Israel on 1950 and established diplomatic relations in 1992.
- India voted against *UN Resolution 181 (II) in 1947,* which partitioned Mandatory Palestine between Jews and Palestinian Arabs.
- India also voted against Israel's admission for UN.

- **Regarding PLO-** In 1975, India recognised Palestine Liberation Organisation as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and permitted it an independent office at New Delhi.
- It came up with a strong statement of solidarity for Palestine in *Non-Alignment Summit 1983* that was held in Delhi.

India was one of the last non-Muslim states to recognise Israel, and the first non-Arab state to recognise the PLO.

- **Cold war dynamics**- The end of the Cold War weakened the Non-Aligned Movement and reduced the ideological hostility towards Israel.
- **Kargil war-** Israel supported India with arms during the Kargil conflict in 1999.
- **2023 war**- India believes in its long-standing support for the establishment of a "sovereign, independent and viable" state of Palestine. India has expressed its support for Israel condemning the terrorist attack by Hamas.

Operation Ajay *was launched by the Indian government to repatriate Indians from Israel and Palestine through special chartered flights.*

What lies ahead?

- The normalisation of Israel and Palestine cannot take hold truly unless past annexations and other points of concern are not resolved.
- For a lasting peace and stability in the region, their focus must turn to finding a solution to the question of Palestine.
- India needs to engage with all sides in the complex West Asian region as 90 lakh strong Indian community in the region and connectivity to West Asia and Europe.

Mahatma Gandhi's stand on Jewish nation state in Palestine
• Gandhi wrote an article 'Jews' in Harijan newspaper where he deeply sympathized for the Jewish people who had historically been unjustly persecuted for their religion. • **Untouchables-** They have been the untouchables of Christianity. The parallel between their treatment by Christians and the treatment of untouchables by Hindus is very close. • Mahatma declared that for the cause of humanity and to prevent the persecution of the Jewish people, even a war with Germany would be "completely justified". • But he did not support the creation of Jewish state in Palestine as • Palestine was already home to Arab Palestinians and the settlement of Jews, which Britain actively enabled was fundamentally violent. • The idea of a Jewish homeland was fundamentally antithetical towards their fight for greater rights elsewhere in the world. • **Influence on India's foreign policy-** Gandhi's opinions, and his own anti-imperialism had a profound impact on Jawaharlal Nehru, and was responsible for shaping the nascent country's foreign policy for decades.

References

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