**PALESTINIAN STATE**

The Israel-Palestine conflict has its roots in the aftermath of World War I when the United Kingdom assumed control of Palestine following the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The region was home to a Jewish minority and an Arab majority, and tensions escalated as Britain was tasked with establishing a “national home” for Jewish people in Palestine, based on the Balfour Declaration of 1917. This declaration was incorporated into the British mandate over Palestine and endorsed by the League of Nations in 1922. Jewish immigration to Palestine increased in the 1920s and 1940s, particularly due to persecution in Europe, including the Holocaust.

Violence between Jews and Arabs, as well as resistance against British rule, grew. In 1947, the United Nations voted for the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem as an international city. While Jewish leaders accepted the plan, the Arab side rejected it, leading to the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948. This move prompted the invasion of five Arab countries and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, known as Al Nakba or the “Catastrophe.” Israel controlled most of the land, while Jordan occupied the West Bank, and Egypt occupied Gaza. Subsequent decades saw more wars and disputes, including Israel’s occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank in 1967. The ongoing conflict centers around issues such as the status of Jerusalem, the rights of Palestinian refugees, the construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and competing claims to the same land.[[1]](#footnote-1)

A Pew Research study conducted in March 2023 shows that only 35% of Israelis think “a way can be found for Israel and an independent Palestinian state to coexist peacefully.”[[2]](#footnote-2) On the other hand, President Biden recently stated that he believes “it has to be a two-state solution . . . a concentrated effort for all the parties—Israelis, Palestinians, regional partners, global leaders—to put us on a path toward peace.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

What do you think? Should there be an independent Palestinian state?

*A 2 state solution is the only option. I don’t think that the state of Israel will cease to exist, and the Palestinians need a state as well, if they aren’t or can’t be part of the state of Israel.*

*I personally don't care if it's a two state solution or one state with equal rights granted to all.*

**WAR CRIME**

 The Geneva Convention and the Law of Armed Conflict generally prohibit war crimes, and provide for prosecution in the International Criminal Court. Broadly speaking, war crimes “are those violations of international humanitarian law (treaty or customary law) that incur individual criminal responsibility under international law.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Three principles characterize acceptable conduct in war: distinction, proportionality, and precaution. “Proportionality prohibits armies from responding to an attack with excessive violence. Distinction requires members of the military to constantly try to differentiate between civilians and fighters. Precaution requires that everything possible is done to avoid harming civilians.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Examples of war crimes include murder, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture, the taking of hostages, and intentionally directing attacks against civilians. War crimes may be committed against combatants and non-combatants, including persons requiring particular protection and those providing humanitarian assistance. Controversially, Palestine is a member state of the ICC, but Israel rejects ICC jurisdiction (as do the US, Russia, India, Egypt, and China).

 There are conflicting and complicating perspectives on what war crimes are being committed in the current conflict. For example, Israel ordered 1.1 million civilians in Gaza to evacuate in advance of an attack, however there was neither enough time or shelter in the southern regions where they were asked to flee to. Hamas has launched thousands of rockets into populated areas and taken over 200 hostages.

What do you think? Is Israel committing war crimes? Is Hamas committing war crimes? Both or neither?

*I be[l]ieve Hamas is the greater war criminal and while Israel is bombing civilians (bad) it has little choice if Hamas is hiding in the civilian population.*

*I think both are committing war crimes. Both sides seem to have called for genocide of the other*

*Look at the numbers killed and injured on either side, especially the numbers killed who are militants vs civilians. It doesn’t take a genius to figure out who is massacring and who is defending what little freedom they have left.*

*The only party responsible for the deaths of innocent civilians is Hamas. Hamas, by placing rocket launchers and military installations in schools, hospitals, and other civilian infrastructure, has left Israel with no choice but to assume collateral damage from targeted strikes.*

**U.S. INVOLVEMENT**

On October 10th President Biden voiced his support for Israel, “[w]e stand with Israel. And we will make sure Israel has what it needs to take care of its citizens, defend itself, and respond to this attack.” Historically the U.S. has supported Israel, giving and selling weapons as well as allowing Israel to borrow from U.S. banks at favorable rates. In 2022, U.S. military aid accounted for 16% of Israel’s military budget. The Iron Dome, a defense system in Israel that uses radar technology to destroy rockets, was made with U.S. parts and partly funded by the U.S. government. U.S. officials have said they will not commit troops to the current conflict, but they have sent equipment like guided-missile carriers and F-35 fighters.[[6]](#footnote-6) The 2024 U.S. foreign aid budget has allocated $14 billion dollars in aid for Israel.[[7]](#footnote-7)

President Biden has also announced $100 million in humanitarian assistance for Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank. Since 2021, the U.S. government has provided over half a billion dollars in humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people.[[8]](#footnote-8)

There are conflicting perspectives. Last month, Josh Paul, a director of congressional and public affairs for the State Department’s Bureau of Political-Military Affairs for over 11 years resigned. He claimed the U.S. was providing imbalanced support for Israel. Israel has voiced concern over humanitarian aid for Palestine, fearing Hamas could use it for its war effort.

What do you think? Should the U.S. support only Israel? Only Palestinian people? Both or neither?

*Israel to an extent. They are a good ally and a foothold in the Middle East; however, the amount of money funneled to Israel is a little ridiculous in light of the struggling Americans back home*

*The U.S. should only support humanitarian aid.*

*This question is vague. If you mean financial, then Israel, as there are plenty of other states support the Palestinians. On the other hand, the US should support the Palestinians by supporting a two state solution.*

*Should call for a cease fire and support innocent civilians on BOTH sides.*

*We should provide humanitarian aid to both while making any and all military funding for Israel conditional on a ceasefire in the short term then ending the illegal occupation and apartheid in the long term.*

*I am tired of spending the American taxpayer's money on foreign wars.*

**SURVEY**

Add the numbers of your responses together. This will help us pair people up for discussion.

**Prompt A**: Should there be an independent Palestinian state?

1. Yes. 2. I have no opinion or my opinion is conflicted. 3. No.

**Prompt B**: Is Israel committing war crimes? Is Hamas committing war crimes? Both or neither?

1. Only Israel. 2. Both or neither. 3. Only Hamas.

**Prompt C**: Should the U.S. support only Israel? Only Palestinian people? Both or neither?

1. Only Palestine. 2. Both or neither. 3. Only Israel.

**Total: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. *Israel Gaza war: History of the conflict explained*, BBC News (Oct. 29, 2023), <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-44124396>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Sarah Austin; Jonathan Evans, Israelis have grown more skeptical of a two-state solution, Pew Research Center (Sept. 26, 2023), [https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/09/26/israelis-have-grown-more-skeptical-of-a-two-state-solution](https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/09/26/israelis-have-grown-more-skeptical-of-a-two-state-solution/). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Rachel Treisman, Biden wants a two-state solution for Israeli-Palestinian peace. Is it still possible?, NPR (Oct. 27, 2023), <https://www.npr.org/2023/10/27/1208694837/two-state-solution-israeli-palestinian-conflict>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *War Crimes*, United Nations, ​​<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crimes.shtml> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Are war crimes being committed in Israel-Hamas conflict?*, DW News, <https://www.dw.com/en/are-war-crimes-being-committed-in-israel-hamas-conflict/a-67103187>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. How the US Became Israel’s Closest Ally,

https://www.vox.com/world-politics/23916266/us-israel-support-ally-gaza-war-aid [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. As 2024 Looms, Biden Unveils $106 Billion Foreign Aid Package,

https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/10/20/ukraine-israel-funding-politics/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. U.S. Support for the Palestinian People, https://www.state.gov/u-s-support-for-the-palestinian-people/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)