

# Vision for Peace between Israel and Palestine: Deconstructing the Problematics of United States Peace to Prosperity Plan 2020

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**Abstract-** According to the world's three most prominent monotheistic religions, Jerusalem is a sacred city. Given this, what are the underlying factors that motivate individuals to split it? Why is it so crucial for Jerusalem to serve as the capital of Israel? What prevents Israel and the Palestinians from deciding between "peace" and "authority" over Jerusalem? Given Jerusalem's volatile history over the past century, what geopolitical repercussions will the city's split have? Does this United States' "Peace to Prosperity Plan," and making Jerusalem the capital of two states, solve the complicated equation of the "two-state solution"? This study relates to all five questions and the other significant variables, such as the problem of refugees and peace in Gaza, with a normative approach to analyze the US Plan for peace between Israel and Palestine. The ideological and emotional state of the people of the West Bank and Gaza is also essential. Thus, this study is crucial to understand why the Plan failed if it did. The study emphasizes the possibilities rather than mere criticism to seek alternates, corrections, and ideological replacements for a comprehensive and sustainable peace between Israel and Palestine.

**Keywords:** Jerusalem, Israel, Palestine, United States, Peace to Prosperity Plan, two-state solution

## INTRODUCTION

When Israel declared its independence in 1948, it transformed the dynamics of regional conflicts in the Middle East, which resulted in shifting political boundaries, rearrangement of alliances, and alteration in the direction of economic, political, and military conflicts. Palestine shrank steadily under Israeli rule, but now it is a war-torn area desperate for peace and exhausted by oppression, poverty, and fear. Currently, there is no workable solution to the ongoing disputes between Israel and Palestine. Before discussing whether the city of Jerusalem is in an apartheid age or whether the parties are observing proper sharing of religious

or holy places and historical assets, it is vital to diagnose the root reasons for this ongoing dispute between Jews and Muslims. Israel and the Palestinians need to know why they can't choose between "peace" and "control" over Jerusalem. In January 2020, Donald Trump, the former President of the United States, released his comprehensive peace proposal titled Peace to Prosperity. Trump proclaimed that the Plan is "A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People." The Peace Plan focuses on the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, none of the historical peace treaties have had desirable effects. The implementation of Trump's peace plan has not been without hitches. Whether or not world leaders agree with Trump, the Peace Plan is now the subject of a worldwide discussion initiated in January 2020. The Peace to Property Plan attempts to separate Israel and Palestine into two states and to establish rules governing their respective citizenships, refugees, prisons, borders, territories, security, economy, city of Jerusalem, and holy sites. The Plan carries two distinct categories, i.e., economic, and political. Trump's administration released both categories on different occasions, unveiling the "economic category" in mid-2019 and the political one in early 2020. The city of Jerusalem is the center point of the Peace Plan.

Jerusalem has been at the center of the dispute because the Abrahamic religions have long struggled to control the Holy City. Conflicting factions in the Palestinian territory have become more hopeful for peace since Donald J. Trump's 2016 election as the 45th President of the United States. The non-bureaucratic manner and neo-pragmatism of Trump's diplomacy raised Palestinians' aspirations, while Trump's assertiveness in building foreign ties and policymaking provided diplomatic joy to Israel. The Middle East viewed the beginning of Trump's ascendancy in the United States as the beginning of peace. However, Donald Trump overlooked the Palestinian narrative during his 2017 tour of the region. Palestinians were stunned by the abrupt cessation of

funding for the principal program for Palestinian refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). This funding cut dashed the hopes of 500,000 refugees who depend on UNRWA for their fundamentally social, educational, and healthcare needs (Beaumont & Holmes, 2018). These refugees dispersed in refugee camps across Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. Then, more shocking things happened, like cutting diplomatic ties with the Palestinians and supporting Israel's plans to take over the Golan Heights and the settlements in the West Bank. The United States officially inaugurated its embassy in Jerusalem on 14 May 2018, the 70th anniversary of Israel's statehood, merged with the US General Consulate in Jerusalem. Donald Trump announced the embassy's relocation on 6 December 2017 (The White House, 2020). The move of the Israeli embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the country's religious and political capital, was a sign of recognition of Eretz Israel. It was a long-delayed plan. Previous presidents of the United States signed a waiver every six months, delaying the move. Nevertheless, Donald Trump kept his campaign promise and changed a policy that had been in place for decades: to put off moving the embassy.

### Literature Review

Kilani, Alawieh, V., & V. (2020) stated that Trump acted less as a mediator and more as a facilitator with his strategy. With such nebulous policies, the world rejected the American administration's efforts to advance Israel's goal. While the Plan did envision a future Palestinian state, it lacked provisions for things like welcoming the return of refugees, creating an army, and maintaining diplomatic contacts with other countries. The Plan's primary focus was on protecting Israel. The Plan suggested a one-state solution with apartheid for the Palestinians than creating a Palestinian state. Dumper (2014) looked deeply into Jerusalem's culture. In his opinion, the city's administration, social life, and government are all permeable enough to make harmony difficult. He said that the city comprises many little boundaries at several locations that provide difficulty to regular city life and many historical sites and compounds offer no trespassing to the public for ordinary access. Sharing the city, as Dumper suggested, would have geographical, historical, theological, and social implications. Dolphin & Usher (2006) offered a different viewpoint on the contentious issue of Jerusalem's division and annexation by exploring it from the Israeli vantage point: why is the so-called "West Bank Wall" necessary? Dolphin voiced several concerns in his book about this building. The author used his experience as the UN's Monitor for three years to provide a picture of the plight of Palestinians when work began on the West Bank Wall in 2002. He pointed out that this was an attack on the Palestinian people in the guise of national security. He used the word "illegal" to describe it because of the International Court of Justice's ruling against the West Bank Wall. Dolphin went on to detail the terrible situation the Palestinians in the West Bank are in because of the construction of the West Bank Wall.

Just as the title of the book, "Struggle and Survival in Palestine," implies LeVine & Shafir (2012) noted many tales of kindness from Jews and Muslims living in this volatile and dangerous area. The authors said that the region's history comprised the words of the affluent and privileged, not of ordinary

people's shared experiences. Personal tales, biographies, memoirs, and interviews inspired LeVine and Shafir's work. The goal was to have a more nuanced understanding of the conflict and despair at the ground level. Strawson (2010) concluded that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is deeply rooted in the law. He brought up three major issues: the League of Nations' mission, the United Nations' division plan, and the Oslo Accords. Strawson said that legal justifications for the engagement of the United States and its allies in the ongoing conflict and Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory after the 1967 war are minimal. He said that this legalistic approach was less likely to end the war than to make it worse between Palestinians and Israeli Jews, the two main sides.

### Methodology

The nature of the circumstances calls for a more logical method of understanding the tools needed for this study. Thus, the present investigation is primarily quantitative, but qualitative elements are also a part of the study to support the stated goals. This study is predominantly descriptive in nature, and it does include some background information. Literature of all kinds about the topic, regional, historical, and central themes, religious and ideological points of view, and so on, all served as sources of information. This study used a descriptive survey to represent the US Peace Plan and Palestinian demands. To determine the attitudes and intentions of Palestinians towards the US Peace Plan, the Palestinian Center for Policy, and Survey Research (PCPSR) conducted these online, mobile messaging, and random sample surveys. Approximately 935 persons participated and provided replies. Most respondents provided no demographic information or chose to remain anonymous. Nevertheless, the surveying agency assured that all participating individuals belong to the territories under the administration of the Palestinian Authority and are aware of the legitimacy or invalidity of the questions and answers. All these individuals had a reasonable understanding of the constraints of their professional and social contexts and the government's capabilities. The authors of this study collected replies to five questions posted by the agency on the website pcpsr.org. The results varied from question to question, as shown in the table below. The graph also shows the percentage factor of all replies against each category. Additionally, the magnitude of responses varies from question to question.

**Table 1**

Descriptive Questioner				
S no.	Question	Response 1	Response 2	Response 3
1	Any chances for the creation of the Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel in the next five years?	Chances are slim or non-existent	Chances are medium or high	Cannot decide

2	The Palestinian leadership should reject the US peace plan or accept it with or without reservations?	Reject the Peace Plan	Accept the Peace Plan with reservations	Accept the Peace Plan without reservations
3	The Trump Plan permits Israel to annex a large part of the West Bank.	Yes	No	Cannot decide
4	After the expansion of the Israeli settlements, the two-state solution is practical enough?	No longer practical	Solution remains practical	Cannot decide
5	Palestinian acceptance of Trump's Peace Plan would lead to the end of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.	Yes	No	Cannot decide

The principal author also conducted personal communications to improve clarity on the subject. These personal accounts are also an important part of this study.

**Results**

*"Any chances for the creation of the Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel in the next five years?"*

Question one is the primary question that has existed since the state of Israel came into being. Seventy-eight percent of individuals questioned said that the chances for this are either slim or do not exist. Twenty-one percent of the people favored the medium or high chances that a Palestinian state could exist alongside the Jewish state in the next five years. One percent were not sure of either of the ideas.

*"Palestinian leadership should reject the US peace plan or accept it with or without reservations?"*

Of the West Bank and Gaza, sixty-nine percent rejected the US Peace Plan. Nineteen percent had reservations against the Peace Plan, but they favored it. Only five percent of individuals preferred without reservations.

***"The Trump's Plan permits Israel to annex a large part of the West Bank?"***

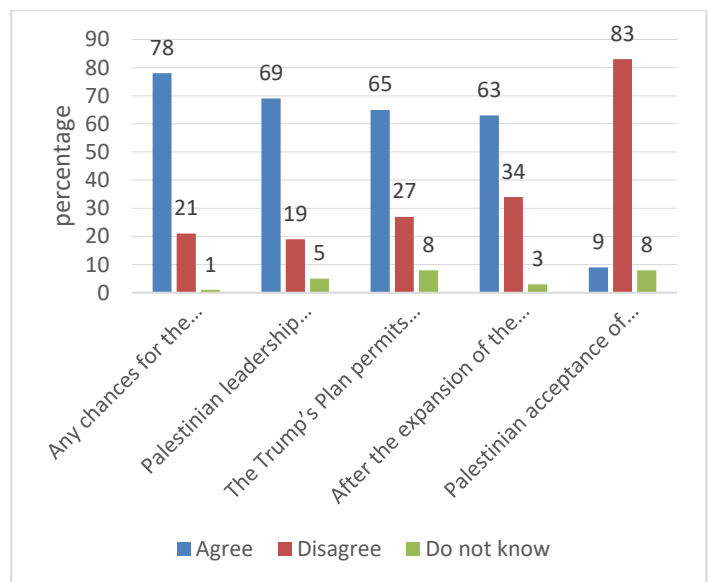
The agency found confusion among the Palestinians regarding the text of the Peace Plan related to the annexation of the West Bank and the Israeli settlements. Thus, a large percentage. Twenty-seven percent, at most, favored the idea that the Peace Plan does not permit Israel to annex a large part of the West Bank. Sixty-five percent said that the Plan favors Israel to annex a large part of the West Bank, including a considerable portion of the Jordan Valley. The rest of the individuals could not decide on a response.

***"After the expansion of the Israeli settlements, is the two-state solution practical enough?"***

This question had significance for the poll as it checks the validity of the Peace Plan as far as the consent of the Palestinians is concerned. Sixty-three percent of individuals said that a two-state solution is no longer a practical option after the US released its Peace Plan. Thirty-four percent said that although they have reservations regarding the validity and acceptability of the peace plan, they still believe that the two-state solution remains practical.

***"Palestinian acceptance of Trump's Peace Plan would lead to the end of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank?"***

Only nine percent believed Israel would leave the West Bank after accepting the Peace Plan. A total of eight percent stayed neutral. But a high number of eighty-three percent stated that taking the Peace Plan by the Palestinian Authority or the people would not affect how Israel works in the West Bank. It will keep its occupation and will not leave the area.



**Figure 1:** Percentage of Responses based on a descriptive questioner

**Discussion**

**The Question of Jerusalem**

Jerusalem has always been the epicenter of conflict, perplexity, and street warfare. This city goes deeply into old religion and politics. It is the keeper of the faith, forgotten history, disregarded wisdom, and discarded intelligence. Its sanctity cultivates understanding as a guardian of prophetic lineages and a witness to miracles. It is the keeper of information that the world must remember. Therefore, the dynamics of this ancient metropolis extend beyond religious belief, intellectual application, and the application of faith to the human community. Therefore, capturing its holiness and power is essential, and whoever has it rules the Middle East.

The Israeli right has consistently advocated for Jerusalem's absolute power and acceptance as the nation's capital. In this regard, the Palestinians view the annexation of the River Jordan Valley and the Golan Heights and the legalization of illegal settlements throughout Palestinian land as simple diversionary tactics. For them, the U.S. Peace to Prosperity Plan was not saying yes as a sign of acceptance but rather saying no a thousand times (Abu Tuameh, 2020).

Jerusalem is mentioned twice in the Peace to Prosperity Plan: briefly in Section 2 and in greater detail in Section 5. These sections focus primarily on the religious features of the ancient city's holy places and political status. Moreover, another brief note titled "Religious Aspects of the Jerusalem Issue" (US State Department, 2020) is also a part of the draft. This note reads, "Jerusalem became the political center of the Jewish people when King David united the twelve tribes of Israel, making the city the capital and spiritual center of the Jewish people, which it has remained for nearly 3,000 years" (US State Department, 2020, p. 15). It discussed more history in the political draft, i.e., the construction and destruction of the First Temple and the Second Temple and their Jewish connections. Another excerpt on p.15 states that "there are nearly 700 separate references to Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible" (US State Department, 2020, p. 15). It stresses that "for 100 generations, the hopes and dreams of the Jewish people have been encapsulated by the words "Next Year in Jerusalem." (US State Department, 2020, p. 15).

The Peace to Prosperity Plan emphasizes religion and is explicitly Jewish. The chronic political tug-of-war in the Middle East, the need for a peaceful resolution of the existing issues between Palestine and Israel, and the desire for peace are at the foundation of the draft. It sparked a new discussion, distinguishing the religious right from the political right. Despite focusing on the religious right to land, the PPP disregards the issue of legitimacy. It is still unclear what gives immigrants the right to claim power and rule over land while completely bypassing the natives.

### A Realistic Two-State Solution?

The Peace to Prosperity Plan is a vision that presents a "brighter" and "beneficial" future for the whole region. It envisions a Palestinian-controlled state of Palestine as incapable of posing a threat to the state of Israel. The US proposal for these lands, known collectively as the Palestine State, includes significant security proposals requiring Israel to control the airspace (p. 3). However, a state may not be effectively sovereign if it cannot independently

prepare for its internal and exterior security and increase its safety measures to neutralize domestic and foreign dangers. The US calls it a "realistic" two-state solution. Hamas, which governs Gaza, has previously been labeled a terrorist organization. Thus, the definition becomes somewhat ambiguous. The United States also thinks the Palestinian Liberation Authority, the other West Bank government, is corrupt. The US Vision for Peace says peace will only be in Palestine if parties fulfill certain conditions.

1. All sides in a war must agree on the terms spelled out in the Peace to Prosperity Plan.
2. Palestinians (and their allies) must acknowledge Israel as a state.
3. It is imperative (for Hamas and its allies) to renounce all forms of terrorism.
4. Palestine and its allies must agree and let the Jewish state take specific security measures.
5. Parties at odds need to devise a practical plan for the region's security agreeable to the region's inhabitants.

The idea of the creation of the State of Palestine is coupled with a promise that "the United States will support the establishment of a Palestinian State if these steps are taken, and the criteria set forth in this Vision are satisfied" (p. 4). However, it is unclear how and when the Palestinians would be able to satisfy the US, as the Plan does not shed light on the criterion of satisfaction that would consequentially allow the United States to fulfill the desires of the Palestinian people for their state.

### A Goodbye to the Two-State Solution?

The term "two-state solution" refers to the bilateralism of a proposition or agreement. As all discussions share the traits of bilateralism or multilateralism, contending parties always become a part of discourses, particularly when establishing a contract. This structure is analogous to constructing a wall between two buildings that separates them and supports and protects them. Based on these points, evaluating the Peace to Prosperity Plan is crucial to see if it helps end conflicts and gain mutual recognition.

- Two parties negotiate the bilateral agreements, with or without the assistance of a facilitator. They address all concerns that affect both sides. The phrase encompasses all contracts between two parties and has a broader meaning (Institute for Government, 2018). It is a potential bipartite treaty that requires the permission and satisfaction of both parties in conflict for all terms discussed. If a circumstance necessitates the participation of a facilitator, all parties must consent. A facilitator mediates all disagreements, handles all lingering issues, and seeks to persuade disputing parties to reach an agreement. Also, both sides must approve all paperwork before it can be made public or part of an agreement.
- The United States Plan for Peace and Prosperity content suggests a bilateral agreement between Israel and Palestine, but it resulted from a joint venture between the United States and Israel, not Israel and Palestine. According to the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority is the most important stakeholder.
- A bilateral agreement safeguards the interests of both parties by addressing commitments and securing arrangements

adaptable to the future. It is about striking a balance between development, politics, culture, and religion equations, which are natural pillars of nationhood and crucial supporting tools in a transboundary negotiation. This aspect of the US Vision for Peace is either absent or highly obscure.

- For PEACE PLAN to be a bilateral agreement, it must protect the interests of both parties. Nevertheless, phrases like "hopes and dreams of the Jewish people" and its support for legalizing Jewish settlements on Palestinian land show that it sides with Israel's lobby.
- A bilateral agreement is not the outcome of unilateral policies but a result of bilateral negotiations. The "Peace to Prosperity" plan is not a negotiated consequence mediated by the US. The US never took the Palestinian Authority on board.
- Bilateral agreements follow international restraints, bilateral treaties, historical facts, and local customs. "For international treaties, ...can range from legal obligations to non-binding agreements of principle" (Institute for Government, 2018). The PEACE PLAN prioritized the rights of emigrants and settlers over the ownership of actual inhabitants. Furthermore, it positioned itself for a forceful implementation.
- A third party that solely acts as a facilitator cannot enforce bilateral agreements between two parties. In contrast, the PEACE PLAN is the construct and imposition of a third party (the United States), neither a negotiation party nor one of the key stakeholders. The Palestinian National Authority, the other major stakeholder, was not even invited to the gathering. For the PEACE PLAN to be a continuation of the Oslo Accords, a Russian presence was mandatory as the second facilitator. However, for the PEACE PLAN, Russia is not among the facilitators.
- Bilateral treaties are documents agreed upon by both parties "since they only involve two countries, which means they can go into effect faster (Amadeo, 2020). On the contrary, there was no deal between Palestinians and Israelis because they did not collaborate.
- Bilateral agreements are moral and, to a great extent, legal bindings. The "Peace to Prosperity" plan is not honest because it gives one side (the Israelis) all the rights for annexation by legalizing illegal settlements and all the past coercive actions taken against the people of Palestine.
- Once the major parties agree, they cannot violate the conditions of their contract. If one party violates the agreement's requirements, the contract becomes null and void and no longer binds either party.

Parties to a treaty are ethically obligated to suggest, apply, or impose its terms within their respective domains of influence. A bilateral agreement is the most prevalent type of legally binding contract in which each party acts as an obligee and an obliger. This kind of contract makes both parties lawfully bound. Since the PEACE PLAN is not a two-way deal, the PLA does not have to agree to or carry out the Plan. As the Palestinians and Israelis have not agreed to the Plan, refusing or not putting it into action cannot be seen as breaking the treaty.

### The Question of Israeli Settlements

Israelis have targeted the West Bank with incursions and settlements. Considering the PEACE PLAN, the United States no longer opposes these settlements. The United States recognized the settlers. The United States asserted that payments do not inherently violate international law (Ayub, 2020). On the other hand, the international community considers these settlements illegitimate and a breach of international law. The Palestinians have acknowledged this issue following the Oslo Accords, which entail a two-state solution. Nevertheless, the growth of Israeli settlements in occupied territory exceeds the bilateral scope of the Oslo Accords. Therefore, the question is whether the two-state option remains viable. Israelis have their objections to this assertion. They recognize their historical ties with the land of Palestine and view these towns as their birthright. Therefore, they have consistently urged against annexing additional portions of Palestinian territory, including the Jordan Valley, which is currently underway through random settlement practices. To win reelection, Benjamin Netanyahu pledged in September 2019 to "absolutely apply sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and all West Bank settlements" (Rasgon, 2020). The problem of Jewish settlements was a central issue in the Madrid Conference in 1991 and the Oslo Accords. The agreements prepared the stage for establishing an interim authority in Palestine, namely the Palestinian Authority (PA). Under the Oslo Accords, the negotiating parties (Israel and the Palestinian Authority) agreed to divide the West Bank into three areas, A, B, and C, for improved administration. These regions account for 18%, 21%, and 60% of the total land area. According to the negotiated draft, both parties shall undergo peace talks in the future and work for a "two-state" solution (AlJazeera, 2018).

However, the Oslo Accords handed the Jewish government nearly complete power over the economy, security, and administrative issues in the areas placed under the PA administration. Consequently, all the attempts to make peace failed so severely. On the other hand, Palestinians have always held the Jordan Valley in high regard. It is fertile and Israeli corporations overshadowed its resources. Therefore, annexing the Valley would extinguish the Palestinians' last chances for future peace negotiations, as they would have nothing to lose. In most of Area C, the Israeli government restricts Palestinian construction and freedom of movement. In violation of the Oslo Accords, more than two hundred communities occupied the area. Although the United Nations had conducted numerous surveys and prepared assessment reports that led to strong opposition to Israeli behavior in the region, their efforts were in vain. Israel continued to construct settlements, introduce illegal settlers onto PA territory, destroy Palestinian habitat, injure men, women, and children, and violate peace agreements.

As a result, Palestinians did not engage in the development processes that could have increased their income, improved their standard of living, enhanced the lives of their citizens, and sustained their economy. The Palestinian Authority rejected the Plan that preferred Israeli control over Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Jordan Valley, and the issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, Mohammad Shtayyeh, termed it a "plan to protect Trump from impeachment and Netanyahu from prison" (Hamodia, 2020).

Since day one, Palestinians have grown weary of Israeli occupation. Settlements made it more difficult to accept anything favorable to their competitor. Therefore, accepting the PEACE PLAN was categorically out of the question. Most Palestinians viewed the Plan as supporting their goals and interests. Furthermore, they naturally had to say "no" to anything else. Palestinians fear implementing the peace proposal as it will worsen their current position. They anticipated sanctions, deteriorating existing economic and political relationships, and repression.

### The Question of Gaza

The United States Peace Plan sets forth several issues regarding Gaza, its governance structure, its economic and social structure, the bodies that currently run Gaza politically as well as militarily, and its fate. The PEACE PLAN discussed Gaza under the term "Gaza Criteria" (US State Department, 2020, p. 25).

### Key Points on Gaza

Here is a list of essential things to know about the Gaza Strip, where the Israeli military is currently fighting.

- Hamas has taken Gazan citizens prisoner.
- The PEACE PLAN listed Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the infamous PIJ, and Hamas as terrorist groups.
- The population of Gaza has horrible lives, and the organizations currently in charge of them do nothing to improve their circumstances. Instead, they seek to achieve power and exploit others.
- Israeli soldiers are keeping security tight in Gaza to stop the spread of weapons.
- Unless the parties agree and fulfill the "Gaza Criteria," no negotiations can continue. Some of the conditions include (a) giving up violence, (b) recognizing Israel as a state, and (c) meeting the other Gaza Criteria requirements.
- If Israel and Gaza reach a peace agreement and form a group that is "acceptable to Israel," it will be apparent that (a) Gaza is free of weapons and (b) Gaza is a demilitarized zone.
- To achieve *comprehensive peace*, it is up to the Palestinian people to make it clear that they reject the ideologies of destruction, terror, and conflict and unite for a better future for all Palestinians (US State Department, 2020, p. 10).

The political and social divides between Israel and Palestine, particularly the Gaza Strip, are more comprehensive than ever. Gaza remains under siege. On the one hand, Hamas and other Gazan forces do not intend to tolerate any opposition. On the other hand, Israel remains prepared to punish the armed groups in Gaza. As a result, the population of Gaza is now living under intolerable conditions. Gazans protest Israel and its military forces every week and on the weekends at the border between Gaza and Israel.

In response to the inquiry about the prospect of selecting between peace and authority for both Israel and Palestine, Dr. Ahsan (personal communication) stated that he does not believe Palestinians have a choice. Under pressure, they make

concessions, uncertain how far they will go. What Israel wants is not what the rest of the world desires. According to W. Al-Modallal, a professor of political science at the Islamic University of Gaza in Palestine (personal communication), the expropriation of Palestinian land reminds Palestinians of their painful experience of losing ground. To Palestinians, this meant that peace was an unattainable goal, given the implicit and explicit statements and actions of the national and Orthodox rights of Israel, as well as the agendas and plans of various parties and groups with labels such as the entire land of Israel 'and' Jerusalem, is the eternal capital.'

It is hardly surprising that the people of Gaza choose military conflict over diplomacy and negotiations. They are at the disposal of Israeli might from all sides. They waste time, space, and resources, from protests to funerals, to get the aggressor to the negotiating table. Palestinians have chosen tenacity and resistance over exile.

The PEACE PLAN, the current state of Palestine as a whole, and the political views of its people all bring up several important issues. There are many critical questions, some of which are the following.

- 1) Can the Palestinians meet the Gaza criteria soon?
- 2) How will the people of the West Bank, most of whom are against an armed struggle, be able to make peace with the people of Gaza (while most Gazans favor an armed struggle) as part of a comprehensive and community-wide peace plan?
- 3) How will a peace agreement enable the disarmament of the Gazans and the end of the siege (by Israel)? Which will occur first, the disarmament or the end of the blockade?

Considering the data depicting the actual situation in Gaza, it is not difficult to conclude that peace between the Gaza Strip and Israel is not achievable shortly. Consequently, Palestine may not be able to meet the "Gaza Criteria" soon. Can we assert that the Gaza Strip will stay under siege? Will Gaza become the site of the worst humanitarian crisis? Is it conceivable for Israel and Palestine to reach a deal on which they and their respective populations can agree? Or will these questions remain unanswered for a very long time? The points listed below are essential to understand the problem better.

- Because Israel now holds the upper hand, its supporters can provoke chaos with little fear of repercussions.
- Palestinians, who are far weaker, can only be confined to select places where they are also under attack or demolition danger.
- If the international community legally recognized a city division, it would not alter the current situation on the ground.
- The stronger party would always attempt to invade the space of the weaker party.

### The Question of Refugees

The Palestinian refugees, as defined by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East, are "persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine, during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948

conflict" (UNRWA, 2020). Since the Arab Israeli war, and more notably, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, there has been an internal and external displacement problem. It is valid for Arabs living in the Holy Land and traditional and liberal Jews who are tired of Israeli occupation and daily hassles. The situation deteriorated in 1948, during the first Arab Israeli conflict, and again in 1967 and 1973. Millions of individuals fled their homes for safety and refuge outside combat zones. The war's outcome was disastrous for the displaced Palestinians as well as for the states that assisted in their resettlement during and after the conflicts. Several neighboring nations, including Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Jordan, and Oman, and the territory managed by the Palestinian National Authority and Israel, have established camps for displaced persons.

In the United States Peace to Prosperity Plan, the question of refugees is discussed starting from page 31, under section sixteen. At the beginning of the refugee discussion, the PEACE PLAN stated that "the Arab-Israeli conflict created both a Palestinian and a Jewish refugee problem." Nearly the same number of Jews and Arabs were displaced by the Arab Israeli conflict" (para. 1), which is factually incorrect. The Arab or Palestinian refugees, which include Jewish families deemed to be citizens of Palestine, were indigenous to the region, whereas Israelis, at least most of them, could not be considered refugees because they were settlers and not natives. Furthermore, when these settlers observed an undesirable scenario in the region, they intended to relocate elsewhere. So, they cannot be called refugees. Instead, they are displaced immigrants who could not set up a home where they wanted to.

In the Peace Plan, the US allegedly tried to permanently kill the question of refugees and keep the issue dead. It states, "their Arab brothers have the moral responsibility to integrate them into their countries as the Jews were integrated into the State of Israel" (US State Department, 2020, p. 30). So, integration into the state of Israel does not mean more than an effort to create political authority by showing a more significant number of state citizens and fetching moral ground to make them settle in the area.

There are three main aspects described concerning the question of refugees in the "General Framework":

1. There are limitations on how these refugees would integrate into the "State of Palestine." Furthermore, of course, there is currently no "State of Palestine." It is just the Palestinian National Authority's efforts to form the State of Palestine. Until then, there may not be any integration of Palestinian refugees or their return to their homeland.
2. The PEACE PLAN stated that Palestinian refugees might integrate into the countries that host these refugees.
3. A suggested number of refugees comprised the third point, which is 5,000/year, subject to the host country's consent.

The European Union sees the United States Peace Plan as a violation of international law, as mentioned by the High Representative of the European Union, Joseph Borrell, in an interview published by the Palestinian Return Center: "The US initiative, as presented on 28 January, departs from these

internationally agreed parameters. For example, the essential elements are problems with borders, the status of Jerusalem, security, and the question of refugees (P.R.C., 2020, p. 3). The Plan does not state how and when these refugees will find a way back to where they belong, and the agenda is just an imposition by a third party, so "For the most part, the issue was to be resolved not in Israel, but through resettlement in Palestine, with some third-party options available based on the sovereign discretion of the states in question. Along with these resettlement efforts, there was to be a compensation plan for each refugee, the Palestinian state, and the host states. No matter how and when the issue of refugees will end, the world must understand that "Palestinian refugees are the essence of the Palestine question, which is the core of the conflict in the Middle East" (Kazak, 2020).

## Conclusion

Thousands of years of tumultuous history have rendered the territory of Palestine, notably the area designated the Holy Land, more fragile, emotional, and sensitive than ever before. When peace or conflict is a topic of discussion, respecting the wishes of either party must be maintained. Negotiations, especially more direct negotiations that can be mutually beneficial, appear to be the only answer to the persistent issue. No external imposition, temporary peace arrangement, or purposeful military solution can benefit the local populace. The State of Israel can only maximize its statehood if the Palestinians' sovereignty is recognized and established. Therefore, a Palestinian and Israeli nation-state may coexist in harmony, but not the other way around. If one party gets protected and secures statehood while the other remains uncertain, the region will become politically and economically unstable. Therefore, any third-party peace plan cannot serve the long-term interests of both Israelis and Palestinians.

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