



2014 - 2015

Model Arab League

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Council on Palestinian Affairs

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National
Council
on US-
Arab
Relations



Original draft by April Sanders, Chair of the Council on Palestinian Affairs at the 2015 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations

Honorable Delegates and Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the 2014-2015 Model Arab League! This year will be a year like no other, and I am ecstatic to serve as your Chair for the Council on Palestinian Affairs at the National University conference. My name is April Sanders and I am a senior at the University of Utah majoring in International Studies with an emphasis in the Middle East and Arabic. This is my third year participating in the National conference.

Being involved in this professional organization has taught me a lot about the Arab World and I hope that your experiences are and will continue to serve you in your educational goals as well as your career goals. My encouragement to you is to get involved with all that the National Council on US-Arab Relations has to offer. There are numerous ways to be involved such as study abroad opportunities, internships, fellowships, as well as the knowledge and education the Model Arab League.

The Council on Palestinian Affairs is extremely important in today's world. It focuses solely on the Palestinians and the everyday struggles that they face in their society and their region. The Palestinians are faced with citizenship infractions, lack of basic needs such as water and food, building insecurity, health concerns, and unending tensions with Israel. Delegates, your role is to successfully complete resolutions geared towards these complex issues while still following your countries' policies and procedures.

The following background guide is to give you resources and guide you on how to start the research process. I am sure that our council will be very productive and will be able to formulate resolutions for the Palestinians. If at any time pre-council you are in need of any questions, feel free to reach out to myself at april.alhady@gmail.com.

Best of luck in all of your research and as the Arabs say, Yalla!
April Sanders

Topic I: Developing means to ensure the accessibility of goods including, but not limited to humanitarian aid, building materials, food, and water, considering controls and restrictions imposed on Palestinian borders

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

The ‘development’ of means to ensure the accessibility of goods in Gaza denotes the creation or expansion of initiatives that will increase the access of Gazans to important goods such as medicine, food, water and construction materials. ‘Humanitarian aid’ refers to food and medical aid provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and foreign governments.

Gaza has land borders with Egypt and Israel, as well as maritime access to the Mediterranean Sea, which is controlled and monitored by Israel. Both countries restrict the flow of goods and people travelling in and out of Gaza for security and political reasons. Most goods and people cannot legally enter or leave Gaza and humanitarian aid is often highly restricted. Of the few that can enter or exit, most face significant delays or obstacles in navigating the border crossings. On the other hand, the West Bank shares borders with Jordan and Israel and thus experiences many of the same challenges with regard to Israel, though generally with severity. This is especially hurtful to the agriculture sector as forbidden goods include certain types of fertilizer.¹ The goal for all resolutions is the easing or elimination of border restrictions on goods and resources, especially those listed in the topic.

B. History of the Topic

The Gaza Strip has been under a near complete air, land and sea blockade by Israel following Hamas’ victory in the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections and the subsequent political takeover of the Gaza Strip from Fatah. The closing of the border points to trade from Egypt and Israel has drastically reduced the availability of important goods in Gaza and by extension, has essentially ended economic growth in the enclave.² According to Amnesty International, the blockade has tripled the number of refugees living in abject poverty and severely limited the amount of aid flowing into the territory.³ Items banned included lumber, steel and iron beams, all of which were banned until June 2010 as “dual-use” materials, items which have civilian applications but could also have military applications as well.⁴

In 2013, the new Egyptian government led by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi shut down tunnels which had previously been used to smuggle goods into the Gaza Strip, and as a result the humanitarian crisis worsened. Fuel had also been transported through the tunnel system which connected Egypt and Gaza, however, the shutdown of the tunnels left the population in Gaza without access to fuel and has led to long power outages in schools, hospitals, homes, and

¹ Kestler-D'Amours, Jillian. "Palestinian Farmers Fighting to Survive." Al Jazeera English. Al Jazeera, 1 Sept. 2012. Web. 10 Sept. 2014. <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/08/201282665450619900.html>>.

² Pandey, Nishant. Crisis in Gaza. Oxfam International, 23 July 2014. Web. 09 Sept. 2014. <http://www.oxfam.org/en/emergencies/crisis-gaza>

³ *Suffocating Gaza*. Rep. Amnesty International, 1 June 2010. Web. 08 Sept. 2014.

⁴ "Guide: Gaza under Blockade." *BBC News*. BBC, 07 June 2010. Web. 08 Sept. 2014.

businesses. The lack of fuel has also caused a severe health hazard as sanitation systems are failing. Additionally, the delivery of resources and humanitarian aid has becoming increasingly difficult to deliver even when organizations and governments are allowed access. Palestinians in Gaza are also prohibited from delivering goods to the West Bank. According to Oxfam, as tensions rise out of desperation for food and water it becomes increasingly dangerous for humanitarian organizations to venture into the area.⁵

The Arab League has been supportive of efforts to reach a just resolution to the Palestinian question as an end goal as well as short term reduction of suffering among the Palestinians. Any progress and improvement of the situation in Gaza and the West Bank would be in the interests of Arab League member states.

C. Finding a Solution: Past, Present, and Future

In order for the Palestinian economy to grow, restrictions on the movement of people, goods, and materials must be reduced or removed. This creates a difficult situation for the League of Arab States to resolve because of the lack of influence the body has over at least one of the main actors, Israel. Addressing the Egyptian and Israeli restrictions on goods would be a core goal of the Council. The League might consider strengthening or partnering with international organizations such as Oxfam and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency as partners in providing more goods and services within Gaza and the West Bank.

Israeli and Egyptian security concerns will need to be addressed in order to achieve concessions. Israel maintains the blockade in order to reduce Hamas' access to materials that it can use to possibly attack Israel or further legitimize itself; therefore oversight of materials or assurances that materials will not be used for military applications are crucially important. The League could propose a role for Egypt in a monitoring capacity, in order to provide accountability for the Arab League and Israel. However, delegations must keep in mind any potential resolutions will have to remain in line with the Arab League Charter, international law, and norms regarding national sovereignty.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How has your country aided the Palestinians in the past?
- What kind of resources does your country have to aid to the Palestinians?
- What are your country's border policies?
- What is your country's policy on humanitarian aid for Palestinians?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How could the Arab League transport aid to the Palestinians?
- How can the League ensure that the Palestinians have access to the necessities of life?
- How can security assurances be made to accommodate the easing of restrictions?

⁵ Pandey, Nishant. Crisis in Gaza. Oxfam International.

IV. Resources to Review

BBC Overview on the Gaza Blockade:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28757657>

UNRWA Overview on the Gaza Blockade:

<http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/statement-humanitarian-organisations-ngos-and-un-organisations-second?id=451>

Examples of Humanitarian Aid Transport to Palestine:

<http://www.morocoworldnews.com/2014/07/135235/moroccan-planes-carrying-humanitarian-aid-to-palestinians-arrive-in-egypt/>

Oxfam International Crisis in Gaza:

<http://www.oxfam.org/en/emergencies/crisis-gaza>

Topic II: Developing arrangements for the repairing and rebuilding of damaged and destroyed architecture

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

The term ‘arrangements’ refers to possible agreements or initiatives that can be reached or created to provide funds, expertise, or materials to go towards rebuilding or repairing damaged infrastructure in Palestine. ‘Architecture’ has been left unspecified in Topic 2, so delegates must reach an agreement on what its purview includes.

Many homes and businesses damaged in the ongoing fighting between Palestinian groups and Israel, damage from both the 2006 and 2014 conflicts, have not been repaired or rebuilt. Many buildings have been left damaged for over a decade. This damage displaces families from their homes and workplaces, which harms the social and economic fabric of the community. Delegates should focus on the causes and consequences of this destruction and neglect when considering this issue, while also considering the reach and ability of the Council to make an impact in this area.

B. History of the Topic

Since 2004, there have been several conflicts between Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and Palestinian groups, primarily Hamas. In each of the conflicts, the overwhelming military superiority of Israel has led to massive damage to homes, businesses, and infrastructure in Gaza. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the damage caused in the Summer 2014 conflict was larger than in the two previous wars.⁶ The damages and subsequent repair efforts are extremely devastating to the local economy—the cost to repair and rebuild after the 2014 conflict is estimated at 4 billion.⁷ Because of limited economic means and the frequency of the conflicts, much of the repair work from previous conflicts has not yet been completed, as new conflicts continue to create new damage as well as slow any repair efforts currently being made.

The Arab League is a vocal supporter of the Palestinian cause and provides significant aid towards that end. However Arab League member states contribute less than 3% of the operating budget of the UNRWA, the agency which assists Palestinian refugees throughout the Middle East, according to a UNRWA representative.⁸ The Council should also consider the implications of Topic 1, with particular reference to the importation of building materials, when addressing this topic.

C. Finding a Solution: Past, Present, and Future

The damage from the 2014 conflict has left over 20,000 homes destroyed or uninhabitable,

⁶ Ashkenas, Jeremy, Archie Tse, Tim Wallace, Derek Watkins, and Karen Yourish. "Assessing the Damage and Destruction in Gaza." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 02 Aug. 2014. Web. 08 Sept. 2014.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Freund, Michael. "UN Pressing Arab States for More Aid to Palestinian Refugees." *UN Pressing Arab States for More Aid to Palestinian Refugees*. The Jerusalem Post, 7 Feb. 2007. Web. 08 Sept. 2014.

further burdening already overstretched aid organizations. Resolutions might address avenues to instigating construction and repair efforts, resources to make said repairs, as well as any other detail the Council finds relevant and applicable. It is important that delegates keep in mind that any resolutions are not required to focus exclusively on short term solutions.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Are there any international organizations that can support internal reconstruction?
- Are there any organizations within Gaza to support internal reconstruction?
- What actions can be taken to prevent further damage?
- What areas of Gaza need urgent/significant repair?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What resources does my country have to help Palestine?
- How can my country help Palestine's infrastructure?
- How can the international community sustainably rebuild/repair Palestinian infrastructure?

IV. Resources to Review

Telegraph Report on Gaza Rebuilding:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/gaza/11075376/Gaza-rebuilding-will-cost-7.8-billion.html>

Report on Rebuilding Efforts in Gaza:

<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-07-23/next-gaza-disaster-after-war-with-israel-no-cement-for-rebuilding>

Wall Street Journal Analysis on Rebuilding Gaza:

<http://online.wsj.com/articles/cease-fire-brokers-grapple-with-how-to-rebuild-gaza-1406247642>

Topic III: Addressing mental health concerns among the Palestinians with special consideration for rehabilitation measures

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

‘Mental health concerns’ refer to all psychological illnesses with special attention to those caused or exacerbated by conflict such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. ‘Rehabilitation measures’ denotes all treatments and possible preventative measures that can be undertaken to treat or alleviate symptoms and conditions. Lastly, the verb ‘address’ suggests that the Council should not only discuss the immensity and root of the problem, but also create and institute processes to prevent or treat it.

Social, economic, and security issues all contribute to the formation of various mental health issues of Palestinians. Poor living conditions, the lack of economic opportunity, and the constant threat of inescapable violence combine in varying degrees to increase the likelihood of developing or of magnifying mental illnesses for many Palestinians. According to a 2011 UNRWA report on the health conditions of Palestinian refugees, “stress related disorders and mental health problems are increasing,” in their affectation of women, children and adolescents.⁹

B. History of the Topic

Mental health in Palestine is not well prioritized, due to what many consider more pressing concerns. However, promoting proper mental health treatment, care, and preventative measures will provide for better quality of life for all Palestinians, especially due to the pressures that are experienced on a regular basis. There are not enough mental health practitioners, facilities, and resources in Palestine to support the number of patients that require treatment and assistance. The UNRWA’s Community Mental Health Program is one of two programs specifically designed to provide coping mechanisms and support for those in the region experiencing mental health problems.¹⁰

The reported number of cases of psychological trauma in Gaza has doubled following the violence that occurred in November of 2012. According to UNRWA, in children specifically, “the stress of the ongoing blockade, continued conflict, extreme poverty, and increased gender-based violence have produced intense fear, bed-wetting, poor concentration, eating disorders, sleeping disorders, irritability, and hyperactivity.”¹¹ In the treatment of adults, statistics for mental health and domestic violence are grossly underreported; however, in 2012, the UNRWA Community Mental Health Program was able to serve over 300,000 adults and children in both the Gaza Strip and West Bank.¹²

⁹ Health Conditions in the OPT." Health Conditions in the OPT. United Nations, 16 May 2012. Web. 08 Sept. 2014. <<http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/71094D7E6883B97F85257A02004FF761>>.

¹⁰ <http://unrwausa.org/campaigns/cmhp>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Health Conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the Occupied Syrian Golan." The World Health Organization Sixty-Sixth World Health Assembly. World Health Organization, 17 May 2013. Web. 10 Sept. 2014. <http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA66/A66_INF3-en.pdf>.

C. Finding a Solution: Past Present and Future

A key issue to discuss is how to increase availability and quality of mental health services for all Palestinians, as mental health is a crucial aspect of comprehensive medical care. The Council may consider several options for aiding the Palestinians—from creating a mental health fund, to training and providing mental health practitioners to treat Palestinians, as well as providing access to resources like medication, psychological distress hotlines, counseling services, etc. Resolutions may focus on the improvement of access to mental health treatment and should also discuss the quality of care and duration of treatment of mental health issues in Palestine.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What resources are already available to Palestinians who have mental health concerns?
- How can transnational organizations help provide mental health services?
- What is your country's stance on material/financial support for Gaza?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can the international community improve access and quality of mental health services?
- How can the Arab League ensure mental health care support is sustainable?
- How can the League of Arab States insure that Palestinians and care providers will have access to medicine and other intervention materials that will likely be needed?
- How might the League of Arab States provide mental health resources geared specifically towards children, considering the care children with psychological conditions need differs greatly from their adult counter parts?

Topic 4: Evaluating the effectiveness of, and devising methods to strengthen and encourage, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement as a means to both pressure Israel and facilitate economic growth in Palestine

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

The term ‘Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions’ (BDS) denotes a campaign aimed at applying social and economic pressure on Israel for its occupation of the Palestinian territories in order to compel Israel to comply with international law.¹³ Topic 4 asks for methods and strategies which the Arab League can use to encourage participation in the campaign and further strengthen the effects of action already being taken, as well as to offset any counter-efforts towards the BDS movement. The goal is twofold—to change Israel’s stance while cultivating the Palestinian economy—and should be equally addressed in the Council. To ‘evaluate’ said actions and methods suggests that the Council analyze past undertakings so that future additions to the BDS movement be as effective and direct as possible.

According to the BDS Movement website:

Boycotts target products and companies (Israeli and international) that profit from the violation of Palestinian rights. Campaigners and groups call on consumers not to buy Israeli goods and on businesses not to buy or sell them... Divestment refers to the targeting corporations complicit in the violation of Palestinian rights and ensuring that the likes of university investment portfolios and pension funds are not used to finance such companies. These efforts raise awareness about the reality of Israel’s policies and encourage companies to use their economic influence to pressure Israel to end its systematic denial of Palestinian rights.¹⁴

The goals of BDS are to bring about the end of Israeli occupation and colonization of Arab lands occupied in June 1967, recognizing the fundamental rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality, and respecting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties (i.e. the right of return).¹⁵

B. History of the Topic

The BDS movement began on July 9, 2005, after over 170 Palestinian organizations—ranging from trade unions, political parties and professional organizations—endorsed a call to begin boycotts and divestment of Israeli companies and demand sanctions against the Israeli state. As listed above, the goal of the campaign was to compel Israel to abide by international laws and standards regarding the Palestinians. In concurrence, the Palestinian National Committee was established in 2007 to organize BDS efforts. In November of the same year, the first organized

¹³ "Introducing the BDS Movement." *BDS Movement*. BDS Movement, n.d. Web. 09 Sept. 2014. <<http://www.bdsmovement.net/bdsintro>>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

BDS conference was held in Ramallah.¹⁶

In the past, boycotts against Israel were not unheard of. Many League member states instituted an economic boycott of Israel after the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, which was initiated by the Central Boycott Office in Damascus. In 1979, however, the situation shifted dramatically with the signing of the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt (leading to the decade-long expulsion of Egypt from the Arab League). The subsequent signing of the Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel in 1993, the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan in 1994, and the establishment of Israeli economic and diplomatic ties with a number of other Arab states have further eroded what was once a more united front against Israel and its economic interests. By 1994, all member states had ended their participation in the boycott, following the Oslo Peace Accords.¹⁷

C. Finding a Solution: Past, Present, and Future

Once a staple for anybody involved with progressive politics in the Arab world, anti-normalization is once again gaining traction as a broad-based justice movement throughout the region. But progress continues to be hindered by a misunderstanding of the rights-based discourse and a lack of proper organization, with debates often consisting of the simple boycotting of Coca Cola, Pepsi, or focusing on the individuals who breach anti-normalization criteria. While many of these initiatives are no doubt an important part of BDS work, BDS's actual growth is limited by the failure of Arab society and media to frame it beyond the immediate consumer boycott, but instead as a global movement.¹⁸

Delegates should keep in mind that support for the BDS movement is not universal in the Arab World, even where League member states agree with the end goals of the movement. Keeping in mind the present BDS movement in the Arab world, resolutions might address loopholes in the system, incentives or motivations to perpetuate the movement, and an analysis of past endeavors.

II. Questions to consider in your research

- How can the League of Arab States be more successful in BDS?
- How can the League of Arab states gain support in their countries for BDS?
- What is the key to convincing people to boycott products they love?
- How have boycotts been successful in the past (both in the Arab world and outside of it)?

III. Questions a resolution might answer

- How might the League of Arab States raise awareness about the purpose and benefits of BDS?
- How might the League of Arab states aid in gaining momentum in the BDS movement?

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Al-Saliby, Wissam. "BDS in the Arab World in Light of the Recent Uprisings." *Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights*. Badil, n.d. Web. 10 Sept. 2014. <<http://www.badil.org/en/article74/item/1685-art5>>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

IV. Resources to Review

BBC Coverage of Gaza Sanctions:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7069203.stm

BDS Movement Site Homepage:

<http://www.bdsmovement.net/bdsintro>

Al-Jazeera on the BDS Movement:

<http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/8/boycott-divestmentsanctionsisraelgazahumanrights.html>

Badil BDS in the Arab World:

<http://www.badil.org/en/article74/item/1685-art5>