



2015 - 2016
Model Arab League

BACKGROUND GUIDE
Council on Palestinian Affairs

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National
Council
on US-
Arab
Relations



Original draft by Lauren Ziegler, Chair of the Council on Palestinian Affairs at the 2016 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations

Honorable Delegates,

I would like to personally welcome you all to the 2015-2016 Model Arab League. The discussion this year will be unique and I am honored to serve as your chair for the Council on Palestinian Affairs at the National University Model Arab League Conference. My name is Lauren Ziegler; I am a senior at Converse College studying History. This is my third year with Model Arab League programs and my second year chairing for the Model Arab League.

As a participant in these conferences, you have the ability to expand your knowledge of Middle Eastern issues, as well as develop critical thinking, research, public speaking, and negotiation skills that you will find useful in the future. I encourage you to capitalize on all of the NCUSAR opportunities offered to Model Arab League alumni. Becoming involved can take many forms beyond debate and research, including: immersion language studies, internships, and study fellowships in Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The Council on Palestinian Affairs is extremely relevant to the Middle East's complex situation. This council addresses a broad spectrum of regional issues that Palestinians face daily. Palestinians continually face depletion of natural resources, chaos ensuing from disagreement among Palestinian factions, lack of access to utilities, and uncertainty concerning citizenship. As delegates, your task is to collaborate with other members in committee to create feasible solutions using your research on your countries' policies and procedures. I am excited to meet all of you. Happy researching!

Best,
Lauren Ziegler

Topic I: Discussing means to redevelop and secure agricultural land as well as access to natural resources within Palestinian territories

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

Agricultural lands are arable territories that can be used to produce crops. A natural resource is any component produced naturally by the earth. The Palestinian territories, namely the West Bank and Gaza, are home to both agricultural lands and natural resources; this topic's goal is to increase Palestinian access to both of these valuable assets. Palestinians rely on arable lands to produce agricultural products and such resources are beneficial to not only the immediate owner of the land, but also his/her community as a whole. Natural resources are also an important sector of any economy, since they can be used in manufacturing or traded for other commodities.

Palestinians whose livelihoods depend on land and natural resources have suffered as such resources become increasingly scarce. Lands near Israeli borders have become dangerous or even destroyed in the midst of conflict. The negative economic impact is debilitating and affects a significant portion of the Palestinian population. Devising a plan to make more agricultural and natural resources available to Palestinians would allow Palestinians to improve their economic standing and living conditions.

B. History of the Topic

Israeli influence in the Palestinian Territories has taken a toll on the amount of land Palestinian farmers can utilize in a harvest. Since 1967 Israeli authorities have commandeered approximately 800,000 olive trees. According to the United Nations, 80,000 Palestinian families are reliant on these harvests and, without these trees, lose a total of \$12.3 million a year.¹ Nearly 11,000 olive trees owned by Palestinians were destroyed in the West Bank in 2013 alone.²

As conflict in the region continues, the number of accessible resources is constantly shrinking. Farms have been depleted of livestock and lands have lost their viability. The blockade in the Gaza Strip has also prevented farmers from reaching their farm lands and livestock grazing areas along the border.³ The truce agreement between Israel and Palestine, signed on August 26, 2014 after seven weeks of conflict, prohibits Palestinians from fishing more than six miles from the

¹ Chalabi, Mona. "How Does Palestine's Economy Work?" *The Guardian*, 14 Oct. 2013. Web. <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/oct/14/palestine-economy-how-does-it-work>.

² Booth, William. "In West Bank, Palestinians Gird for Settler Attacks on Olive Trees." *The Washington Post*, 22 Oct. 2014. Web. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/in-west-bank-palestinians-gird-for-settler-attacks-on-olive-trees/2014/10/21/eb4f5096-54a8-11e4-892e-602188e70e9c_story.html.

³ "Fractured Lives in Gaza as Reconstruction Has Barely Begun." *OXFAM International*. Web. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/occupied-palestinian-territory-and-israel-crisis-gaza/fractured-lives-gaza-reconstruction-has-barely>.

Gaza coast.⁴ Palestine is also struggling to find enough clean drinking water to support its population, as its supply depends on Israeli infrastructure.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

In order to increase the amount of farm land and natural resources available for Palestinian use, the Council must first review the current situation on the ground. The Council should identify non-governmental organizations and international non-profits that have been monitoring the changes to land and resource availability. Israel's influence in the Palestinian territories is the most important factor to consider when finding a solution to this problem. The Council should identify the most effective ways to counter Israel's policies concerning Palestinian farm lands and natural resources, thus creating opportunities for economic growth.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What is my country's history with importing Palestinian products?
- Are there any international organizations that support the redevelopment of Palestinian agricultural lands?
- What actions can be taken to preserve current Palestinian land and resources?
- What are the long-term implications of land and resource loss within the territories?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How should the League approach this problem?
- Can or should the League provide protection of Palestinian resources?
- How can the League support non-governmental organizations helping to secure Palestinian land and resources?

IV. Additional Resources to View:

- [How Palestine's Economy Works](#)
- [ANERA Report: Agriculture in the West Bank and Gaza](#)

⁴ Sherwood, Harriet, and Hazem Balousha. "Gaza Ceasefire: Israel and Palestinians Agree to Halt Weeks of Fighting." *The Guardian*, 27 Aug. 2014. Web. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/26/gaza-ceasefire-israel-palestinians-halt-fighting>.

Topic II. Exploring a role for the League in encouraging routine discussion amongst Palestinian factions and a coordinated approach for facilitating state affairs

I. Introduction to Topic

A. General Background

A “faction” refers to a dissenting group within a larger party. The Palestinian territories are currently controlled by Fatah and Hamas, two separate political factions. While the Fatah party oversees the West Bank, Hamas is responsible for governing the second Palestinian territory, the Gaza Strip. These two organizations disagree on how to best govern the Palestinian people. These differing approaches have prevented collaboration between Hamas and Fatah, which has in turn brought the unification of the West Bank and Gaza to a standstill.

Both Palestine’s domestic and foreign affairs have been affected by the power struggle between Hamas and Fatah. Beyond the unification of the Palestinian territories under one legitimate government, Palestine’s political divide has also sparked complicated relations between Palestine and other nations. The Council must now clarify its own role in encouraging a dialogue between these two factions.

B. History of the Topic

Exploring the League’s role in encouraging meaningful discussions between ruling factions requires knowledge of the major players in Palestinian politics. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), founded by the Arab League in 1964, was created to represent the entire Palestinian population. Fatah, which was originally Chairman Yasir Arafat’s party, is a Palestinian nationalist front that is now a part of the PLO’s purview. On the other hand, Hamas is a branch of the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood. The faction is ideologically opposed to the state of Israel.⁵ The two factions have stout ideological differences and disagree as to how Palestinian affairs should be conducted.

In 2003 the Gaza Strip came under Palestinian control following Israel’s unilateral decision to withdraw from the territory. In 2006 the militant Hamas party won parliamentary elections and began governing the Gaza Strip in 2007. The remaining Palestinian territory, the West Bank, stayed under Fatah’s control.⁶ Another attempt was made in 2011 to bring Gaza and the West Bank under one political entity, but it also failed. The most recent discussions, which began in 2014, are intended to bring the Hamas and Fatah factions together. These talks are irregular and take place whenever most convenient for the participating parties.⁷ The constant power struggle between Hamas and Fatah hinders peace talks for the formation of a Palestinian state; other

⁵ Pina, Aaron. “Palestinian Factions.” CRS Report for Congress, 2005. Web. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21235.pdf>.

⁶ “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.” Thomas Reuters Foundation, 23 July 2014. Web. <http://www.trust.org/spotlight/Israeli-Palestinian-conflict/?tab=briefing>.

⁷ *Al Jazeera*. “Palestinian Factions to Form Unity Government.” *Al Jazeera*, 23 Apr 2014. Web. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/04/palestinian-factions-form-unity-government-2014423134227518508.html>.

nations find difficulty in negotiating with a group whose foreign affairs are controlled by two very different governments.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

Encouraging discussions is often an international effort and does not necessarily fall exclusively under the Arab League's purview. However, this Council should examine ways in which the League can encourage meaningful discussions between the different representatives of Palestinians. Though Hamas and Fatah are the largest factions, there are smaller parties that the League may or may not consider bringing to the table. The Committee might also identify how often such dialogues should be held, where they will take place, and which issues will be discussed. These issues might include the possible merging of Hamas and Fatah into one legitimate government of the Palestinian people. As the Arab League has not taken an official stance on the power struggle between the Hamas and Fatah factions, the Council might take the time to discuss the possibility of doing so. Facilitating recurring discussions between Palestinian factions could result in more successful negotiations with other nations.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What previous League-wide attempts have been made to facilitate discussion among Palestinian factions?
- What made these attempts successful or unsuccessful?
- What nations were previously involved in the negotiations among the factions?
- What are the main points of contention among the factions?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- Can the Council develop a time frame for regular discussions?
- How involved will the League be in seeing that discussions are held?
- What resources can the League provide to assist these conversations?

IV. Additional Resources to View:

- [CIA Factbook: West Bank Government](#)
- [Congressional Research Service: Palestinian Factions](#)

Topic III. Devising methods to improve access to power, electricity, and water utilities in occupied Palestinian territories, bearing in mind restrictions on imported materials

I. Introduction to Topic

A. General Background

The Council will define “power” as the component used to produce electricity and water utilities. The term “water utilities” refers to treatment of waste water, infrastructure needed to transport water, and sewage disposal. A Palestinian’s access to power, electricity, and water utilities greatly determines his/her ability to live comfortably and work productively. Power and electricity allow Palestinians to access global communication networks, produce their own goods, cook more nutritious meals, and be generally self-sufficient. Water access, which is essential to Palestinian livelihood, is complicated by infrastructure necessities such as water treatment and sewage disposal. More consistent access to these utilities will improve Palestine’s standard of living and economy.

There are several geographic, political, and environmental obstacles that need to be addressed when developing solutions to increase Palestine’s access to vital resources. Increasing access to these utilities is made difficult by restrictions on imported materials, meaning any resources that come from outside of the territories. This became a particularly contentious issue during the summer of 2014, amidst the latest clash in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As much of Palestine’s water and power infrastructure runs through Israel, many Palestinians had no access to these systems during the summer’s conflict.

B. History of the Topic

Palestinians do not have control over their infrastructure and development of power, electricity, and water. Power has been a particular issue since the occupation, because no Palestinian political faction claims responsibility for power distribution. Israel reports that the Palestinian Authority owes \$430 million in debt for accumulated power and electricity usage. The billing methods are ambiguous and there remains disagreement concerning which political faction should actually pay Israel and the regional power company.⁸ In 2010 the Energy Authority sanctioned Palestinian Power Generation Co. to build a power plant project in the West Bank.⁹ The project has yet to be completed because there is no guarantee that the facilities would be protected from regional conflict.¹⁰

Access to clean water in the Palestinian territories is also lacking. In the absence of water treatment plants and proper sewage disposal, a general decline in the population’s health ensues, as does the possibility for a disease outbreak. In a report concerning Palestine’s restricted access

⁸ Hadid, Diaa. “Palestinians’ Unpaid Electric Bills in the West Bank Thicken Tension With Israel.” *New York Times*, 5 May 2015. Web. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/06/world/middleeast/palestinians-unpaid-electric-bills-in-the-west-bank-thicken-tension-with-israel.html>.

⁹ “Palestine Power Generation Co. PLC (PPGC)” Padio Holding. Web. http://www.padico.com/Public/English.aspx?Page_ID=674&PPID=1099.

¹⁰ Hadid. “Palestinians’ Unpaid Electric Bills.”

to water, the World Bank references a town in East Jerusalem that is unable to get a permit from Israel to drill a well. The contractors began treating the water in homemade filters.¹¹

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) estimates that between 5% and 10% of homes located in Palestinian territories are not connected to water networks. Towns that do not have water access resort to purchasing low quality water from trucks that charge 400 times water's market rate. USAID has implemented programs to build treatment and pipeline infrastructures, but the problem has not been ameliorated. Only about 3% of Palestinian waste water is treated and reused. The remaining untreated raw sewage becomes runoff and jeopardizes natural resources, as well as agricultural land.¹² Without reliable access to clean water or water treatment plants, Palestinians must often compromise their own safety and health in order to access whatever resources are available.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

Palestine currently faces a lack of power, energy, and water, a pertinent issue that has not been resolved by either of the ruling factions or international efforts. The issue remains a prominent threat to the population and will continue to handicap the economic and social sectors of society if the Council does not devise short-term and long-term solutions. Power is an expensive commodity and it is necessary to distinguish responsibility and alternative solutions to ensure responsible production and consumption. The Council should identify which organizations are currently tackling the various segments of power, energy, and water infrastructure. The Council may compare varying strategies used by these organizations to improve infrastructure. Lastly, delegates might choose to support specific infrastructure projects by encouraging state cooperation. Proposed solutions should be creative enough to maneuver restrictions on imported materials, yet realistic enough to implement quickly.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What has been done in the past to solve similar issues in Middle Eastern nations?
- Can my country offer assistance to a resolution that will improve Palestinian access to power, electricity, and water?
- Are there any organizations inside Gaza or the West Bank that could offer assistance?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What can the League, as a collective body, do to solve this issue?
- How can individual nations be useful in negotiations regarding power, energy and water infrastructure?
- When will implementation of the solution begin and how long will it last?

¹¹ "West Bank and Gaza: Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development." The World Bank, 2009. Web. <http://unispal.un.org/pdfs/47657-GZ.pdf>.

¹² "West Bank and Gaza: Water and Infrastructure." United States Agency for International Development, 18 Nov. 2014. Web. <https://www.usaid.gov/west-bank-and-gaza/water-and-infrastructure>.

IV. Additional Resources to View:

- [The World Bank: Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development](#)
- [Palestinians' Unpaid Electric Bills in the West Bank](#)

Topic IV. Addressing legal issues and developing concrete proposals related to the identity and citizenship status of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem

I. Introduction to Topic

A. General Background

The state of Israel claims the entirety of Jerusalem as its capital. However, the Palestinians consider East Jerusalem to be the capital of the State of Palestine. Out of all Arabs residing within Jerusalem, the vast majority live in Eastern Jerusalem; the area is also home to a large minority of Israeli citizens.

When addressing citizenship status, the Council should keep in mind that Palestinians are particularly sensitive to the topic, as it addresses their own identities as individuals and as members of a group. A person's citizenship status dictates the rights they possess, the duties they shoulder and the privileges they receive via the political authority of his/her state. As residents of East Jerusalem, which International Law considers an occupied territory, Palestinians have limited rights. Israel dictates the rights of Palestinians in Eastern Jerusalem. These include the rights to vote, move throughout the region, construct homes, and operate businesses.

B. History of the Topic

According to the Human Rights Watch, approximately 270,000 Palestinians reside in East Jerusalem. For residents living in this occupied territory there is a disparity between citizenship and residency status. Palestinians living in the annexation of East Jerusalem were granted "residency status" in 1967.¹³ However, Palestinians living in East Jerusalem are not full citizens of Palestine or Israel.¹⁴ Residents are afforded some benefits, but no rights are guaranteed. A Palestinian with only resident status in East Jerusalem has limited mobility, no municipal voting power, and few job opportunities. If a Palestinian relocates outside of Jerusalem, works in the West Bank, or leaves for more than three years for reasons other than education, he/she will have great difficulty returning to Eastern Jerusalem.¹⁵

Palestinians with resident status are able to apply for Israeli citizenship, effectively increasing their rights. However, applying for citizenship is often seen as a rejection of one's Palestinian identity. This factor often deters Palestinians from gaining Israeli citizenship, as they hesitate to alienate themselves from their native culture.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

¹³ "East Jerusalem: Legal Status of East Jerusalem and its Residents." B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, 9 May 2010. Web. http://www.btselem.org/jerusalem/legal_status.

¹⁴ Purkiss, Jessica. "A Series on Statelessness: Palestinians in East Jerusalem Fighting Complete Erasure." *Middle East Monitor*, 17 Nov. 2015. Web. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/15306-a-series-on-statelessness-palestinians-in-east-jerusalem-fighting-complete-erasure>.

¹⁵ Van Esveld, Bill. "Separate and Unequal." Human Rights Watch, 19 Dec. 2010. Web. <http://www.hrw.org/report/2010/12/19/separate-and-unequal/israels-discriminatory-treatment-palestinians-occupied>

The Council should find a viable solution to this problem, which affects a large portion of the Palestinian population. Any solution should address a Palestinian's right to own property, enter the labor market, and move about the region. Solutions could identify how Palestinians can maintain their native culture after acquiring Israeli citizenship. The Council should also think about developing a proposal that could be agreeable to both Palestinians and Israel. Any compromise reached should improve the rights of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What legal issues prevent Palestinians from gaining citizenship?
- What resources are available for collecting information about current Palestinian views on citizenship?
- What are the social and cultural repercussions Palestinians face when they acquire Israeli citizenship?
- How will a solution effect the League's relationship with Palestine and Israel?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can the Arab League aid Palestinians in their attempts to acquire Israeli citizenship?
- What role can the Arab League play in preserving Palestinian identity within Israel?
- How will a resolution affect the residents of East Jerusalem?

IV. Additional Resources to View:

- [Israel Redefines, Divides Easy Jerusalem Palestinians](#)
- [Israeli Citizenship Status vs. Residency Status](#)