



2020-2021

Model Arab League

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Council on Palestinian Affairs

ncusar.org/modelarableague

National
Council
on US-
Arab
Relations



Original draft by Paul Manville, Chair of the Council on Palestinian Affairs at the 2021 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on US-Arab Relations

Honorable Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 2020-2021 Model Arab League and the Council on Palestinian Affairs. My name is Paul Manville, and it is an honor to serve as your Chair. I am a graduate from Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia, where I earned my degree in History and Foreign Politics. This marks my sixth year participating in the Model Arab League Program, and I am looking forward to the insightful discussion and passionate debate that I am sure you will all bring.

The Council on Palestinian Affairs is an integral part of the Arab League, and the topics below address a variety of issues that continue to plague the region. Your responsibility will be to research and develop solutions to these dilemmas while simultaneously representing the interests and positions of your country. As such, it is absolutely integral that you show up having done your due diligence in researching the politics of your country as it relates to each individual topic, though you might also find it beneficial to research the positions of the other member-states. The team that is most prepared will likely end up performing the best as well.

Take full advantage of the opportunities you have. Speak up often during both moderated and unmoderated caucuses and do not be afraid to share your ideas with the room. The more often you stand up and put yourself out there the more chances you will have to influence the flow of debate and maintain some agency over resolutions that end up written.

Finally, it is sometimes important to remind everyone that this is only a simulation. Resolutions will fail, some ideas will not make it into final drafts, and debate and argument might break out between delegates. As long as you are respectful, 'in-character,' and enjoying yourself, you are doing everything you are supposed to.

If you have any further questions you can email me at ManvilleMAL2020@gmail.com. Good luck with your research, and I look forward to meeting you all at the conference!

Best,

Paul V. Manville

Topic I: Establishing means to support the renovation of damaged and dilapidated infrastructure within Palestine, keeping in mind the strict blockade

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

To say that the infrastructure in Palestine was falling apart would be an understatement. Nearly every meaningful bit of infrastructure in Gaza and the West Bank is failing in some way.

Electricity is almost entirely provided by Israel, which also results in an unequal distribution of power, as seen by the statistics surrounding outages.¹ Similarly, Amnesty International notes that Israel has taken complete control of Palestinian water supplies, and worked to force a dependent relationship as a result of that.² Moreover, as a result of Israel's numerous bombing campaigns against Gaza, coupled with the strict blockade against the region, much of Gaza is left damaged and unable to rebuild, leaving Gaza in further debilitating poverty.³

Devising methods to rebuild Palestinian infrastructure - especially in war-torn Gaza, which has been hit the hardest - would go a long ways to assuring a higher quality of life to all Palestinian citizens. Just as significant, establishing mechanisms for a self-sustainable Palestine that is less reliant on Israel for water and electricity would be an important step towards further legitimizing Palestine as an independent state on the global stage.

¹ "Palestine Infrastructure Overview." *Massader Palestine - Home*, www.massader.ps/en/page/1512912471.

² "The Occupation of Water." *Amnesty International*, 2017, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/11/the-occupation-of-water/.

³ *Ibid*

B. History in the Arab World

The infrastructural issues within Palestine stretch back decades. In November of 1967, Israel passed a law that barred Palestine from building any new water pumps without the express permission of the Israel army.⁴ Since the passing of that law, Israel has essentially maintained a monopoly over the collection and distribution of water, to the detriment of Palestinians.⁵ Even outside Gaza, Israel enforces strict permit laws, wherein only 3% of permit requests in Area C (roughly 60% of the West Bank) are approved, leaving housing options scarce for most Palestinians.⁶

As with most issues plaguing Palestine, the infrastructural stagnation facing the occupied territories is exacerbated by the imposition of the Gaza Blockade. Israel has a strict list of items that are categorically barred from entry, including construction materials. This has led to the steady deterioration of the infrastructure in the area, and with it the quality of life in the nation.⁷ A number of NGOs have stepped up to try and make strides towards circumventing the restrictions, with varying results. However, organizations have also been met with criticism as normalizing the blockade by treating the restrictions placed by Israel as reasonable and something to work around, rather than opposing the restrictions themselves.⁸

⁴ "The Occupation of Water." *Amnesty International*, 2017, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/11/the-occupation-of-water/.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ "Just 3% of Palestinian Building Permits in Area C Are Approved by Israel." *Middle East Monitor*, 21 Jan. 2020, www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200121-just-3-of-palestinian-building-permits-in-area-c-are-approved-by-israel/.

⁷ "Gaza Blockade Preventing Vital Reconstruction: International Agencies Sound the Alarm - Occupied Palestinian Territory." *ReliefWeb*, 7 July 2016, reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/gaza-blockade-preventing-vital-reconstruction-international-0.

⁸ Barakat, Sultan, and Firas Masri. "Still in Ruins: Reviving the Stalled Reconstruction of Gaza." *Brookings*, Brookings, 22 Aug. 2017, www.brookings.edu/research/reviving-the-stalled-reconstruction-of-gaza/.

Previous humanitarian efforts in the region have largely been met with limited success, as Israel maintains a tight grip on border security, and heavily restricts what materials can be brought into the country, even by United Nations officials. Only as recently as February of 2018, did Israel officially allow international humanitarian aid materials to flow into Gaza, after it approved the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanisms operation within the territory.⁹ However the United Nations blew the whistle in 2015, declaring that Palestine was on the path to becoming virtually unlivable as early as this year.¹⁰ One of the chief concerns is the lack of drinking water - again, due to an inability to renovate or establish water infrastructure.¹¹ OXFAM reported that barely 4% of water was drinkable, and the number of Palestinians being hospitalized for kidney diseases increases yearly.¹² Even with Israel's aforementioned agreement to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, Israel has yet to approve all of the materials for the construction of necessary water infrastructure, leaving Gaza in a perpetual water crisis.¹³

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

One of the key challenges this topic presents the council with is figuring out how to diplomatically maneuver around Israel in a way that is not liable to spark an armed conflict. Managing the needs of Palestine in conjunction with the restrictions Israel has placed on materials coming into Gaza and the West Bank will be no small feat. Not to mention the

⁹ "Israel Approves International Humanitarian Aid to Gaza, Working with Qatar." *i24NEWS*, 9 Feb. 2018, www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/middle-east/167267-180209-qatari-official-says-working-closely-with-israel-to-direct-aid-into-gaza.

¹⁰ Linshi, Jack. "Gaza Could Become 'Uninhabitable' by 2020, U.N. Report Warns." *Time*, Time, 1 Sept. 2015, time.com/4019509/gaza-uninhabitable-unctad/.

¹¹ Failing Gaza: Undrinkable Water, No Access to Toilets and Little Hope on the Horizon." *Failing Gaza: Undrinkable Water, No Access to Toilets and Little Hope on the Horizon | Oxfam International*, OXFAM, www.oxfam.org/en/occupied-palestinian-territory-and-israel/failing-gaza-undrinkable-water-no-access-toilets.

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

complicated relationship many Arab League states have with the Hamas government that is *de facto* ruling Gaza; some states will find themselves more willing to aid Hamas than others.

Because the outside circumstances surrounding the current infrastructural dilemma in Palestine - the Israeli occupation and the on-going blockade against Gaza - are all but entirely outside of the League's hands, the League should consider focusing its efforts towards alleviating some of the cascading effects those circumstances have had, while also taking care to not normalize the occupation and blockade as "normal" and 'just something Palestinians have to live with.'

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What NGOs could help in these endeavors?
- What materials or services could my country provide to these ends?
- What infrastructure is most needed in Palestine, broadly? What about Gaza or the West Bank specifically?
- Are there ways to build more long-lasting or resilient infrastructure, even in light of the bombings Palestinians face?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How will these resources be provided? In what quantities, and by who?
- Who will be responsible for the distribution of these resources?
- What role, if any, will Israel play in this solution?
- How does this resolution prepare a more self-sufficient Palestine?

IV. Additional Resources

- [World Bank - Palestinian Partnership for Infrastructure](#)
Overview of the World Bank's program to help Palestinian Infrastructure
- [Timeline: The Humanitarian Impact of the Gaza Blockade](#)
OXFAM report on the humanitarian crisis the Gaza Blockade has caused. Accurate as of 2018
- [The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism](#)
Breakdown on the specifics of what the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism has accomplished and continues to work towards
- [Partial List of Items Permitted/Prohibited into the Gaza Strip](#)
List of items prohibited and permitted into Gaza

Topic II: Addressing the increased financial burden encroaching as a result of the enactment of the United States ‘Taylor Force Law,’ and Israel’s similar ‘clearance revenue’ deduction.

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

As it currently stands, the overwhelming majority of the budget of the State of Palestine is provided through foreign aid from a number of countries and organizations, most notably the United States, the European Union, and Israel.¹⁴ However over the past few years, a number of laws or policy changes have been enacted that have further constrained the already limited finances of the Palestinian government. As a result of the Taylor Force Law, the United States has suspended foreign aid to Gaza and the West Bank out of concern for the so-called ‘Martyr Fund’ — the stipends the Palestinian Authority sends to families of those wounded or killed by Israel.¹⁵ Israel responded in turn in June 2018, deducting the cost of the Martyr Fund from the clearance revenue they provide to Palestine.¹⁶

Around the same time, the United States cut financial support to a number of U.N. organizations that were involved in the rebuilding and restoration of Palestine, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).¹⁷ While these have not directly impacted the bottom line of the Palestinian

¹⁴ Kessler, Glenn. “Analysis | Have the Palestinians Received 'More Aid than Any Group in History'?” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 9 May 2019,

www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/05/08/have-palestinians-received-more-aid-than-any-group-history/.

¹⁵ Lamborn, Doug. “Text - H.R.1164 - 115th Congress (2017-2018): Taylor Force Act.” *Congress.gov*, 7 Dec. 2017, www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1164/text.

¹⁶ Levush, Ruth. “Israel: Law on Freezing Revenues Designated for Palestinian Authority.” Library of Congress: Law, March 1, 2019. <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/freezing-revenues/israel.php>.

government, it does further undercut outside efforts to provide relief, and other states have followed suit, including the Netherlands and Australia, which each made cuts to their own foreign aid spending to Palestine.¹⁸

All of this serves to strip the Palestinian government and people of hundreds of millions of dollars of previously afforded financial aid. Palestine is already an economically burdened state and these cuts can severely exacerbate many of the issues Palestine is currently facing.

B. History in the Arab World

The Palestine Mujahidin and Martyrs Fund was established in 1964 as a way for Fatah to pay back to militants wounded or killed by Israel.¹⁹ Over the next few decades the fund would go through a number of renamings and evolutions, before ending up in the state it currently is - though every iteration would continue serving the same function as the original.²⁰ Criticism has been consistently leveled against the practice, and Abbas has fluctuated on which individuals fall under the purview of the fund, in the past excluding members of the PLO, and to this day not including Hamas.²¹ In response to criticism, the Palestinian Authority has largely defended the practice however, arguing that the payments keep families above the poverty line, and that should the PA stop funding such payments, Hamas will fill the gap to gain influence over East Jerusalem.²² As of 2017 the Martyr's Fund costs approximately \$350 million USD a year.²³

¹⁷ Kessler, Glenn. "Analysis | Have the Palestinians Received 'More Aid than Any Group in History'?" The Washington Post. WP Company, May 9, 2019.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/05/08/have-palestinians-received-more-aid-than-any-group-history/>

¹⁸ JTA. "Netherlands Cuts Aid to Palestinian Authority over Terrorist Salaries." The Times of Israel, November 21, 2019. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netherlands-cuts-aid-to-palestinian-authority-over-terrorist-salaries/>.

¹⁹ Marron, Rayyar. "Humanitarian Rackets and Their Moral Hazards: The Case of the Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon." Google Books. Routledge, April 14, 2016. <https://books.google.com/books?id=lz37CwAAQBAJ>.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ <https://search.proquest.com/docview/469055001>

In 2018, the United States enacted the ‘Taylor Force Act,’ named after a U.S. army veteran who was killed by a Palestinian extremist in 2016.²⁴ This in turn brought additional attention to the Palestinian Authority Martyr’s Fund, a fund run by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) that pays out a monthly stipend to the families of those killed inciting political violence against Israel.²⁵ In response to what the United States and Israel have criticized as financially encouraging terrorism, the Taylor Force Act suspends all U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority for as long as the payments to martyr families continue.²⁶ Similarly, in 2019 Israel enacted the Law on Freezing Revenues Designated for Palestinian Authority - deducting the total cost of the Martyr’s Fund from the clearance revenue the Israeli government pays to the Palestinian Authority.²⁷

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

This is a topic that is deceptively nuanced. It might appear easy to consider thinking with your nation’s checkbook, but acting rashly could have political ramifications. Israel and the United States are already actively punishing Palestine for what they see as actively endorsing and

²² Koplou, Michael J. “Taylor Force Act Could Trigger Israelis' Nightmare Scenario.” Haaretz.com, April 24, 2018. <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-taylor-force-act-could-trigger-israelis-nightmare-scenario-1.5444078>.

²³ Kessler, Glenn. “Analysis | Does the Palestinian Authority Pay \$350 Million a Year to 'Terrorists and Their Families'?” The Washington Post. WP Company, August 15, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2018/03/14/does-the-palestinian-authority-pay-350-million-a-year-to-terrorists-and-their-families/>.

²⁴ “Graham's Taylor Force Act Set To Become Law.” United States Senator Lindsey Graham, March 21, 2018. <https://www.lgraham.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/3/graham-s-taylor-force-act-set-to-become-law>.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1164/text>

²⁷ Levush, Ruth. “Israel: Law on Freezing Revenues Designated for Palestinian Authority.” Library of Congress: Law, March 1, 2019. <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/freezing-revenues/israel.php>.

funding terrorism, and any state that explicitly agrees to underwrite the budget for the Martyr Fund could quickly find themselves facing diplomatic retaliation from either the U.S. or Israel. As such, this topic encourages the council to think more creatively and find ways to mitigate the issues at hand, which go beyond the Palestinian budget being constrained by foreign powers, but also touch on the blurred lines between Palestinian freedom fighters resisting a foreign occupation and terrorists inflicting wonton harm against a largely innocent population, and the relationship the Palestinian government has with either of those camps.

It is also to consider the internal politics of the Martyr's Fund. One of the defensive lines from Abbas in favor of continuing the payments to martyrs and their families has been one of concern that Hamas will step up to make those payments should the PA fall short, something that could further jeopardize Palestine's already tenuous standing on the international stage. Solutions will have to effectively balance the interests of the United States, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority in order to be able to adequately address the issues touched on.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What is my country's relation with Israel or the United States?
- What is my country's economic situation?
- Are there any ways aside from direct payments to the governments of Palestine that my state can provide assistance in this issue?
- Who benefits from Palestine's so-called 'Martyr Fund'?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- Will the Martyr Fund be reinforced and upheld by the League, or will some sort of alternative be offered?
- What other incentives could be provided for those retaliating against Israeli occupation?
- How might the United States or Israel respond, and how can they be placated?
- How does this resolution help Palestine become more economically self-sufficient?

IV. Additional Resources

- [FY 2018 U.S. Foreign Aid to Palestine](#)
 - *Statistics and information of the last full year Palestine received foreign aid from the United States prior to the Taylor Force Law*
- [Library of Congress: Law on Freezing Revenues Designated for Palestinian Authority](#)
 - *Official language of the law Israel passed allowing clearance revenue deductions*
- [USAID Foreign Aid Explorer](#)
 - *Overview of the Foreign Aid provided to different countries from the United States. Useful for determining how much a country may be beholden to the U.S.*

Topic III: Developing means of encouraging cooperation between disparate Palestinian factions.

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

The political sphere of Palestine is currently dominated by two parties that are frequently at odds with one-another. The Palestinian Authority - presently run by Mahmoud Abbas and the Fatah Party - is the internationally recognized representation of Palestine, and operates out of Ramallah in the West Bank. In Gaza, Hamas has taken control and is the *de facto* government, but is branded a terrorist organization by most Western states, including the United States, the European Union, and Israel.²⁸ Furthermore, the military branch is branded a terrorist organization by Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and is banned in Jordan.

The last election that saw both Hamas and Fatah participate was the same 2006 election that ultimately caused the demise of the unity government. Though numerous reconciliatory agreements between Fatah and Hamas have been signed over the years, none have amounted to any substantial change or meaningful progress, and relations between the two remain strained, and the representation of the Palestinian people remains divided as ever.

For years Palestine has effectively been run as two separate countries, which further divides the movement for a liberated Palestinian homeland. Working to establish a meaningful amount of cooperation between the West Bank and Gaza would be crucial towards leaving Palestine in a stronger position domestically and internationally, with the eventual goal of a united government over both regions.

²⁸ "Foreign Terrorist Organizations." *U.S. Department of State*, www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm.

B. History in the Arab World

In 2006, Hamas defeated Fatah in parliamentary elections. However, Fatah declined to recognize Hamas' electoral success, and was in turn forced out of Gaza. Hamas established itself as the *de facto* government in Gaza, while the PLO nominally holds authority over the region. Despite varying efforts to bridge the gap between them, Fatah and Hamas remain divided.²⁹ The chief point of conflict between the two parties centered around their approach to relations with Israel.³⁰ Fatah and the PLO took a more diplomatic approach, attempting to normalize relations with Israel in an effort to loosen restrictions, while Hamas continued an armed resistance against occupying forces.³¹ As a direct result of Hamas' seizure of Gaza, Israel enacted the infamous blockade against the region that continues to this day.³²

Previous attempts at establishing a unified government have been ultimately unsuccessful. Agreements were signed three separate times between 2011 and 2014, but each time fell through, with a ranking Fatah member commenting on the dissolution of the 2014 unity government that "this one is weak and there is no chance that Hamas will allow it to work in Gaza".³³ The most recent effort began in 2017 and was initially met with praise and optimism. Recently, though, the effort has all but collapsed, with the resignation of the unity Prime Minister, largely viewed as an attempt to isolate and pressure Hamas.³⁴ The unity effort has further deteriorated since the

²⁹ "Timeline: Hamas –Fatah Conflict." Al Jazeera. May 4, 2011. Accessed July 7, 2019. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/05/2011549435141647.html>

³⁰ Tahhan, Zena. "Hamas and Fatah: How Are the Two Groups Different?" *Palestine | Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 12 Oct. 2017, www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/10/hamas-fatah-goal-approaches-171012064342008.html.

³¹ Ibid

³² "Gaza Blockade." *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory*, United Nations, www.ochaopt.org/theme/gaza-blockade.

³³ "Fatah Official: Palestinian Unity Government on Verge of Collapse." Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 16, 2015.

<https://www.jta.org/2015/06/16/israel/fatah-official-palestinian-unity-government-on-verge-of-collapse>.

induction of the new Prime Minister of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Mohammad Shtayyeh, who is also accused to invalidating his Hamas opposites.³⁵

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

Establishing an apparatus that incentivizes Fatah and Hamas towards cooperation is a daunting task, one that has been attempted and failed multiple times in recent years. Learning from those attempts and forging a new policy in light of previous shortcomings is going to be pivotal in producing a working solution. It is also important to ensure that the Arab League never oversteps its boundaries with the member states - Palestine is a sovereign nation, and the resolution should seek to affirm, rather than infringe on that sovereignty.

It is also pertinent to bear in mind the immediate ramifications of cooperation with Hamas.

Hamas taking control in Gaza was the direct catalyst for Israel enforcing the blockade that has so devastated the region. Taking steps to assuage Israeli fears might be an important step towards ensuring Israel does not escalate the situation and ultimately damage the livelihood of Palestinians. Resolutions to this topic will require a number of balancing acts: supporting Palestine while respecting independence, recognizing the interests of Hamas and Fatah, and acting in the best interest of Palestinians in totality while not slighting Israel to the point of retaliation.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

³⁴ "Palestinian President Abbas Accepts PM Rami Hamdallah's Resignation." *Alaraby*, The New Arab, 29 Jan. 2019, www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2019/1/29/palestinian-president-abbas-accepts-pm-rami-hamdallahs-resignation.

³⁵ Melhem, Ahmad. "New Government Stresses Unity, Yet Ostracizes Hamas." *Al-Monitor*, 9 Apr. 2019, www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/04/new-government-palestinian-hamas-division-israel-elections.html.

- What caused previous efforts towards a unity government to fail?
- What are the primary disagreements that fuel the relationship between the parties?
- What is my country's relationship with Hamas and Fatah?
- What is hoped to be accomplished by bringing these organizations together?

III. **Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- What incentives will bring both Fatah and Hamas to the table?
- What are the ideological differences between Hamas and Fatah that should be addressed?
- What role will the Arab League play in the facilitation of Palestinian cooperation?
- What goals are the varying groups working towards together?

IV. **Additional Resources**

- [Al-Jazeera - Hamas and Fatah: How Are the Two Groups Different?](#)
 - *An introduction and history of Hamas and Fatah as of 2017, including key disagreements between the two parties.*
- [State of Palestine Mission to the United Nations - Government of the State of Palestine](#)
 - *Overview of the government of Palestine from the United Nations. Contains information on Palestine's diplomatic relations, as well as the functions of the State of Palestine and the PLO.*
- [Palestinian Mission in Denmark - Palestinian Government](#)
 - *The Palestinian Mission in Denmark details the political system within Palestine, including a list of relevant political parties and preliminary details on the specifics of the Palestinian constitution.*
- [Constitute Project - 2003 Constitution of the State of Palestine, with Amendments through 2005.](#)
 - *The 2003 Constitution for the State of Palestine.*

Topic IV: Working to develop the healthcare infrastructure within Gaza and the West Bank in order to more adequately respond to emergencies.

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

Palestine's healthcare infrastructure is severely lacking, as exemplified by the massive disparity in healthcare quality between Israel and the Occupied Territories. Childhood mortality within Palestine is nearly five times higher than in Israel, and maternity deaths are twice as common.³⁶ In short, Palestine already has a less-than-adequate healthcare system for a litany of issues - many of which are addressed in other topics — and those systems are being pushed to their breaking point as a result of the present on-going pandemic. The lack of sovereignty that Palestine is currently contending with, especially the Gaza Blockade, harshly limits access to necessary supplies. As such, Palestinian hospitals are typically underequipped for my serious or complicated procedures, and will frequently refer such patients to treatment in Israel, a process often delayed by a bureaucratic system that requires approval for each case.³⁷

As recently as July 22nd, there were concerns that a “total collapse” was imminent, largely in response to the breakdown of cooperation between Israel and Palestine.³⁸ This is made worse by Israel actively destroying essential equipment, such as the recent demolition of a quarantine center in Hebron, the epicenter of the Palestinian outbreak.³⁹ Citing an increase in attempted

³⁶ Leach-Kemon, Katie. “Visualizing Health Disparities in War and Peace: Israel vs Palestine.” *Humanosphere*, 22 Aug. 2014, www.humanosphere.org/science/2014/08/visualizing-disparities-war-peace-israel-v-palestine/.

³⁷ “Eastern Mediterranean Region.” World Health Organization. World Health Organization, n.d. <http://www.emro.who.int/pse/information-resources/abu-abed.html>.

³⁸ ILH Staff. “UN Envoy Warns PA at Risk of 'Total Collapse' Due to Coronavirus Crisis.” *israelhayom.com*, July 22, 2020. <https://www.israelhayom.com/2020/07/22/un-envoy-warns-pa-at-risk-of-total-collapse-due-to-coronavirus-crisis/>.

terrorist attacks, Israel has also clamped down on medical tourism, further limiting the options of Palestinians seeking care.⁴⁰ While it was originally possible to apply for and receive special permission to travel into Israel in case it was medically necessary, the practice ended in 2016.⁴¹ The options of Palestinians are heavily constrained by circumstances outside of their control. While policy proposals may not do much to ease the current burden posed by Covid, the situation can serve as a case study and be used to develop alternative strategies for any future disease outbreaks in the region.

B. History in the Arab World

Following the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian National Authority was given jurisdiction over the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and established its own Ministry of Health (MOH).⁴² The MOH succeeded the Israeli-ran ‘Health Department of the Civil Administration,’ and was responsible for the administration of healthcare to the West Bank and Gaza.⁴³ This arrangement proceeded uninterrupted and with minimal fanfare until the 2007 Battle of Gaza. Following the expulsion of the PLO and Fatah from the Gaza Strip, Hamas was *de facto* the government in power in the region, and so the MOH was unable to assert any amount of authority, though the PLO continued to provide financial donations to healthcare providers in the area.⁴⁴ Hamas’ rise to power in Gaza

³⁹ “UN: COVID-19 Efforts Hampered amid Israeli-Palestinian Breakdown.” News | Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, July 22, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/covid-19-efforts-hampered-israeli-palestinian-breakdown-200722111602590.html>.

⁴⁰ Meštrović, Tomislav. “What Is Medical Tourism?” *Medical News Net*, 23 Aug. 2018, www.news-medical.net/health/What-is-Medical-Tourism.aspx.

⁴¹ “Israel Bans Travels by Palestinians after Tel Aviv Attack.” *The Iran Project*, 9 June 2016, theiranproject.com/blog/2016/06/09/israel-bans-travels-palestinians-tel-aviv-attack/.

⁴² Giacaman, Rita, Hanan F Abdul-Rahim, and Laura Wick. “Health Sector Reform in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT): Targeting the Forest or the Trees?” Health policy and planning. U.S. National Library of Medicine, March 2003. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1457109/>.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Omer, Mohammed. “Gaza's Hospital Stock Running on near Empty.” Health | Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, June 12, 2011. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/06/20116126552679412.html>.

also precipitated the Gaza Blockade that is still in place today, and heavily restricts access to medical supplies.⁴⁵

Though the MOH is the prime governmental healthcare provider in Palestine, particularly the West Bank, there are a number of international organizations and NGOs that work to provide aid whenever possible. The most active instance is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which is responsible for almost ¼ of all healthcare spending in Palestine, and treats millions of Palestinians a year.⁴⁶ Palestinians also have an active private sector, and previously were able to find treatment in Israel when unavailable in Palestine. In essence, the Palestinian Healthcare sector was not in a strong position to withstand the brunt of an international pandemic.

The center of the Coronavirus outbreak in Palestine is centered primarily around the Hebron district, with a recent resurgence that is being blamed on an attempted ‘return to normalcy.’⁴⁷ To date Hebron has seen roughly 7,000 total cases, out of a current total 12,000 in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.⁴⁸ Refugee camps remain another hotspot, as they are frequently cramped and lack necessary PPE for each refugee. On July 15th alone, 729 refugees were diagnosed with Covid.⁴⁹

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

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ “United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.” UNRWA, n.d. <https://www.unrwa.org/?id=64>.

⁴⁷ Kuttab, Daoud. “Palestinian Tribes in Hebron Asked to Help Stem the Spike in COVID-19 Cases.” Al. Al-Monitor, July 14, 2020. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/07/hebron-covid19-westbank-palestine-cases.html>.

⁴⁸ “Palestine Records 545 New COVID-19 Cases, 12,427 in Total.” Xinhua, July 25, 2020. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-07/25/c_139238532.htm.

⁴⁹ ABU TOAMEH, KHALED. “Coronavirus Hits Palestinian Refugee Camps in West Bank.” The Jerusalem Post | JPost.com, July 15, 2020.

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/coronavirus-hits-palestinian-refugee-camps-in-west-bank-635172>.

The healthcare system within Palestine has a litany of issues that impact the quality and quantity of care even when things are “normal”. The lack of adequate medical supplies or properly trained professionals is of concern in of itself, which is made orders of magnitude worse by the on-going blockade against Gaza, making it difficult if not impossible to import the required supplies.

Many of the other issues plaguing Palestine broadly - and Gaza specifically - are made more apparent in the context of a pandemic, including homelessness, population overcrowding, the lack of freedom of movement, and infrastructural issues that leave the majority of Palestinians at increased risk of illness as is.

One band-aid fix has been the continued support of the UNRWA through their “Family Health Team”, a program established to provide healthcare to those in the West Bank that would have otherwise not been able to afford or access it. However, this has several shortcomings, most notably that the UNRWA has no presence in Gaza, effectively cutting their ability to provide care in half. Furthermore, as has been mentioned previously, numerous states have begun cutting their donations to the UNRWA specifically in response to their disagreements with Palestine, which in turn reduces their ability to act.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- Are there any systems in place in my country that could be mimicked in Palestine?
- How does the on-going Gaza blockade impact the ability for healthcare professionals to treat patients? Are there ways to mitigate that?
- What has been my country’s response to pandemics or epidemics in the past?
- What resources are most lacking in Palestinian healthcare facilities, and how could they be provided?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How will treatment be improved in the short term? How about long term?
- What early warning procedures can be established?
- In what ways can the League cooperate to contain and combat a regional epidemic?
- What can be done for Gazans stuck during a healthcare crisis?

IV. Additional Resources

- [Worldometer: Coronavirus in Palestine](#)
 - *Regularly updating information on Coronavirus in Palestine*
- [UNRWA in Palestine - What We Do](#)
 - *Summary of the UNRWA health programs active in Palestine*
- [Aetna International - Health Care Quality in the Middle East](#)
 - *Aetna providing summaries for health care conditions in numerous states in the Middle East*