

# IRS JOURNAL

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Bilkent University  
International Relations  
Society





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## Editor's Note

Writing my very first editor's note on the journal that has given me my first writing experience is a delight which I strongly believe that I should start off by mentioning, and it is a great honor to publish the first issue of IRS Journal of the Fall Semester.

In the past year, and in fact since 1948, the world has seen the obvious genocide of Palestinians. It is still being documented on every social media platform and general media. Nevertheless, we felt hopeless, weak, and sick to the stomach as there is nothing remarkable a university student from Turkiye can do that will make things better for Palestinians. We tried to spread awareness, and attempted to be the voice of those innocent lives who are not just numbers but human beings.

In the past issues we have covered news from Gaza, but this issue is completely focused on Palestine and Israel in which the pieces will cover the introduction to actors, recent events, and the genocide of Palestinian people. Additionally, Palestinian resistance, the international system's behavior in the long history of the conflict, and specifically Turkiye's approach will be examined.

I would like to thank the writers who have contributed to the entire publishing process of this issue from the bottom of my heart. My writer peers and I are young people who are eager to write and create awareness through the strength and impact of the words. IRS Journal will be published every two weeks to address the news and events in global politics.

Last but not least, I also would like to thank the entire IRS board for their help and support to me and to the journal endlessly. I hope this issue will be a great and an awakening read for you.

**Aslısu Furtana**

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## Introducing the Actors of the War: Hamas, Hezbollah, and Netanyahu and His War Cabinet

Israel-Hamas war and the Gaza genocide has been ongoing since 7th of October, 2023. As the conflict grows into a larger scale, the actors should be recognized.

### Hamas:



The political organization, founded in 1987 and in control of the Gaza Strip since 2007, carried out the surprise attack on 7 October. Ismail Haniyeh was the chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau until he was assassinated in July 2024. Yahya Sinwar holds the position now.

### Benjamin Netanyahu:

First elected in 1996 general elections by a narrow margin of 1%, Netanyahu has always been an opposed to two-state solution, even calling peaceful evacuations and peace attempts a “mistake” and a “waste of time.” He is now serving his sixth term as the Prime Minister of Israel, the others were in between 1996–1999 and 2009–2021.

After the surprise attack on 7 October 2023, Netanyahu declared that Israel would go to war with Hamas, saying: "We will turn all the places where Hamas is organized and hidden into cities of ruins. I say to the people of Gaza – get out now" – and then bombed the areas to which Gazans had fled.

### Israeli War Cabinet

The Israeli war cabinet, which was formed five days after the beginning of the war included the opposition alliance, National Unity and its leader Benny Gantz besides the Netanyahu led Likud, and its allies. The war cabinet was the main perpetrator of the ongoing genocide in Gaza.



### Hezbollah

The Lebanon-based political party/militant group also plays a key role. The group was formed as a result of the second Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and has been in conflict with Israel ever since. The conflict has escalated as part of the spillover from the Israel-Hamas war and appears to be turning into a full-scale war between the two sides, with Israel launching an invasion of Lebanon in early October.





## The Current Situation in Gaza

One year into the Palestinian Genocide being committed by Israel, the statistics coming from the Middle East are still horrifying. Since October 7, 2023, the Palestinian Health Ministry has announced that 41.595 Palestinians were killed. Furthermore, this calculation will likely be around much less than the actual number since thousands of people are still under the rubble. Of the identified dead, 56 percent are women and children. In Lebanon, the number of deaths caused by Israel is now at 1540. Almost 2 million people are displaced due to Israeli attacks in Palestine, and about 63 percent of the structures in Gaza are destroyed or damaged. According to the UNDP, rebuilding Gaza would take more than 15 years, even if the construction in Gaza increased fivefold. Moreover, over 50.000 children are suffering from malnutrition.



Israel officials, on the other hand, are still insisting on the numbers being “manipulated” and not reflecting the reality. While the numbers are frightening, many observers from outside remain, only considering these numbers as, – numbers–. Seeing 16 people being killed in Syria by Israel as morning news, instead of real people who had a real passion, families, and aims, is still upsettingly familiar and disappointing.

Selin Akpınar



## What Happened on October 7?

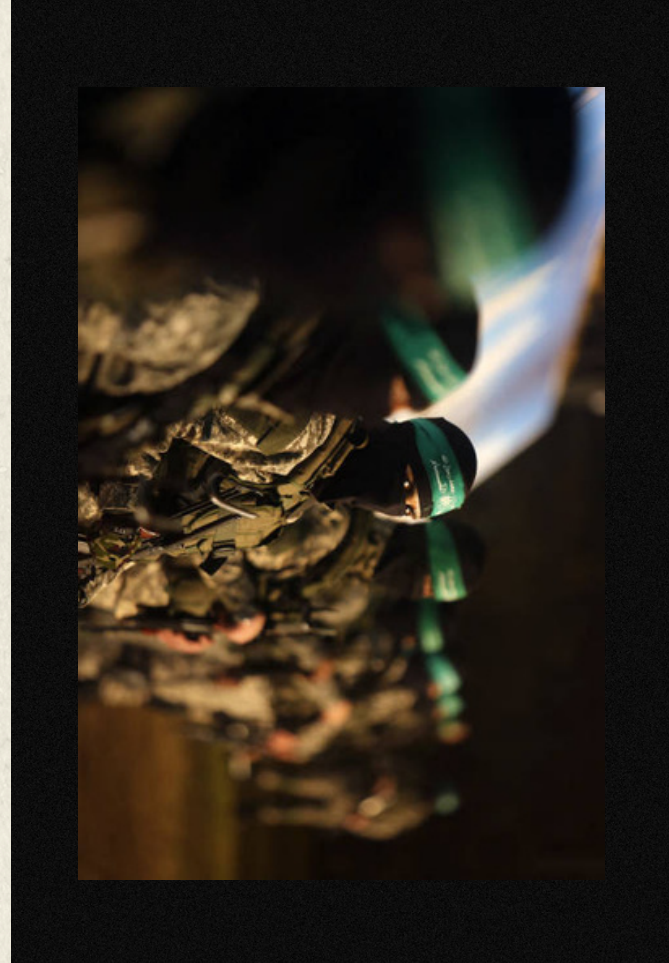
The war between Israel and Palestine has been going on for 12 months. The struggle of the people of Gaza, where we witness human rights violations and genocide, becomes more difficult day by day. So what happened on October 7?

At approximately 9:30 am, Hamas announced the launch of its operation called "Al-Aqsa Flood", and this attack also took place on the Sabbath of Simchat Torah, the Jewish holy holiday. These attacks took place from land, sea, and unexpectedly, from the air via paragliders. On October 7, which Israelis call the worst day since the Holocaust, the Hamas side began to control some border security points and took some Israelis as hostages.

Approximately 52 civilians were killed in the Kfar Aza attack, approximately 108 in the Be'eri attack, and approximately 15 civilians in the Netiv HaAsara attack. Hamas said it was holding the hostages for the release of Palestinian prisoners on the Israeli side. During the attacks, 240 people, mostly civilians were taken prisoner.

These attacks were met with a great shock for the Israeli side. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called an emergency meeting of security officials and the IDF launched what they called the "Iron Sword" operation in the Gaza Strip.

Netanyahu also threatened to destroy every place where Hamas is organized and hiding and to demand civilians in Gaza to leave the city immediately. The Israel Electric Company, which provides 80% of the Gaza Strip's electricity, completely cut off electricity to the region.



The IDF declared combat readiness and asked Israeli civilians living along the Gaza border to stay where they were and civilians living inside Israel to stay in shelters. Also during the day, due to both Hamas attacks and Israel's response, the roads around Gaza, and Tel Aviv Ben Gurion Airport were closed, and most airlines suspended their flights to Israel.



## The 1948 War, and The First Nakba

The land that is now considered Israel had been home to the Palestinian people for centuries, with multiple flourishing villages and cities scattered throughout the area. Palestinian leaders who wanted the creation of an independent state for the Ahl Filistin, allied with the British to overthrow Ottoman rulers, during WW1.

Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the British acquired the land of Palestine as a mandate. This led to increased Jewish migrations from Europe to Palestine, and whilst Arab revolts attempted to rebel against the British and the Jewish settlers, they were mercilessly crushed by the colonial power of the British. After years of oppressing the Palestinian population and arming Zionist militias, in 1947, Britain handed over the issue of Palestine to the newly-established United Nations.



The UN passed a partition plan (scheduled for 1948), which divided it into a Jew-dominated Israel and an Arab Palestine. The land was divided into two parts, when the population ratio was a significant 2:1 for Palestinians and the Jews respectively, and most of the land, especially the fertile areas, was allocated to the Jews. Moreover, the planned Jewish territories were saturated with thousands of Palestinian Christians and Muslims, who were being forced to become minorities in their own homeland.

Meanwhile, Zionist defense forces launched Plan Dalet (otherwise known as Plan D). This began what is notoriously referred to as the First Nakba. They began carrying out attacks outside the UN-proposed Jewish land, by setting fire to Arab villages in an attempt to clear out transportation lines. UN reports simultaneously unveiled and condemned incidents of Palestinian women and children being “stripped, lined up, photographed and then slaughtered”. Consequently, large swathes of Palestinian populations fled to neighboring states, and, as the Zionists intended. Therefore, a day before the British mandate ended, the Zionist leaders declared the State of Israel.

The Zionist government, at that point, sought to replace all evidence of Palestine. Cities with Arab names were promptly replaced by Hebrew ones; a massive afforestation effort was carried out in all places where Palestinian villages were destroyed.

Overall, 6000 Israelis were identified to have died during the 1948 war and Nakba, but concrete records for Palestinians were not maintained. However, an estimated amount of at least 15000 Palestinians were murdered during this period, along with as many as 750,000 exiled from their own homeland.





## **Palestinian Resistance: First and Second Intifada**

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In 1967, Israel fought another war with the neighboring Arab countries; as a consequence of which, it was able to gain control of the Syrian Golan Heights, Jordanian West Bank, and the Egyptian Gaza and Sinai Peninsula. This meant that Israel was now governing the areas that had a Palestinian refugee majority.

However, Israel still occupied the Palestinian majority areas of West Bank and Gaza and Jewish settlers began moving into the West Bank and Gaza. On December 8, 1987, an Israeli vehicle crash killed 4 Palestinians, giving rise to protests in Jabalia Camp. The eruption of this Palestinian frustration gave way to the first Intifada (the Arabic word for “uprising”), which lasted from 1987 to 1993. They began as non-violent protests, the demonstrations soon escalated into violence, which led to a brutal retaliation by the Israelis. Whilst the Palestinians stuck with stone-throwing, the Israeli weapon-of-choice was guns and extreme violence, to such an extent that the UN Security Council severely condemned the Israeli response to the Intifada. Around 100 Israelis and over 1000 Palestinians perished in the First Intifada.

Eventually, in 1993, both sides signed the Oslo Accords, which called for the formation of the Palestinian Authority to allow a minimal form of self-governance for the Palestinian people. On 28 September 2000, Israeli opposition leader, Ariel Sharon, raided the Al-Aqsa compound with heavily-armed military to assert Israeli sovereignty over the site that is viewed as holy by both Muslims and Jews.

This resulted in the Second Intifada (2000–2005), whereby around 1000 Israelis and at least 4973 Palestinians died.

However, whilst the first characteristic that is assigned to the Second Intifada is Palestinian suicide bombings, in the first month of the Intifada, Palestinians largely relied on non-violent protests and stone-throwing, the Israeli army retaliated with rubber-coated bullets and live ammunition. Even after the first month, despite extremists resorting to violent attacks, much of the Intifada was non-violent.



By September 2005, Israel withdrew from Gaza, signaling the end of the Second Intifada. Whilst it appears liberating for the Palestinian people, Israel instead replaces their presence with stricter border control and checks, debilitating the movement of Palestinians in and out of the border, and accompanies it with grossly voyeuristic surveillance policies, which continued till the October 7 incident, and continues to do so.



## The Unspoken Side of Genocide: Palestinian Women

Palestinian women have been pivotal in social and political struggles throughout history, yet their contributions often remain obscured. The occupation of Palestinian territories, which began in 1967, is not merely a geographical issue; it has profoundly influenced women's roles in society, compelling them to confront various layers of oppression. From the early days of resistance to ongoing involvement in protests against military actions and settlement expansions, Palestinian women have been at the forefront of both national and feminist movements. They challenge not only colonial powers but also patriarchal norms within their society. Organizing protests, providing community support, and leading grassroots initiatives, these women defy constraints, proving that their voices are integral to the broader struggle for justice and equality. Their resilience and commitment have significantly shaped the narrative of resistance, yet their stories often go untold, underscoring the need for a deeper understanding of their contributions in the fight for Palestinian rights.



The roots of the Palestinian women's movement can be traced back to the early 20th century. In 1911, women's participation in armed resistance against Jewish settlers marked a critical moment in this struggle. Local women's organizations, emerging in rural committees, gained momentum with urban demonstrations following the Balfour Declaration. Groups like the Arab Palestinian Women's Union in 1921 and the National Islamic Association in 1925 cultivated women's activism, allowing them to assert their presence in the broader national struggle. The Palestinian Arab Women's Congress, held in 1929 at the Wailing Wall, exemplified this engagement, with over 200 women attending.

The Nakba in 1948 further transformed the course of resistance. Rather than being passive, Palestinian women became active agents in their struggle against dispossession and occupation. Armed groups like Zahrat al-Ukhawan (Wildflower Girls), founded in Jaffa in 1933, showcased women's vital roles in resistance movements. The following refugee crisis that ensued altered women's social positions, compelling them to take on roles that extended beyond traditional expectations, engaging in community organizing and advocacy. The fact that women participate not only in the struggle but also in different areas of society is one of the most important outcomes of the feminist struggle.



## The Unspoken Side of Genocide: Palestinian Women

The formation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the 1960s marked another pivotal shift. Women not only participated in its structure but also received military training, thus solidifying their involvement in the national narrative. The rise of political movements and pan-Arabism inspired a new generation of Palestinian women to embrace activism. However, the aftermath of the 1967 Six-Day War complicated their circumstances, as the conflict exacerbated existing social challenges and demanded increased political engagement.



The First Intifada (1987–1993) was a milestone for Palestinian women's visibility in activism. Women actively participated alongside men in demonstrations against the occupation, organizing peaceful protests and asserting their political agency. Despite this surge in activism, women's voices remained marginalized within political frameworks dominated by male leadership, underscoring the necessity for a feminist perspective in the movement. While women's participation increased by the Intifada's end, traditional gender roles still overshadowed their rights and achievements.

The struggles of Palestinian women extend beyond the conditions of occupation; they are deeply rooted in the fight for gender equality. These women have been instrumental in both national and feminist movements, yet their contributions often remain invisible. Recognizing and supporting the fight for Palestinian women's rights is essential, not only in the context of ending occupation but also in advancing gender equality. Their experiences and activism serve as powerful examples for feminist movements worldwide, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates the fight for liberation with the quest for gender justice.





## Criticizing International Organization: Are They Doing What They Should Be Doing?

As Israel's decades-long oppression and torture of Palestine continues, governmental and non-governmental organizations and their help become more and more crucial to the people of Palestine.

Since last year, both governmental and non-governmental organizations have increased their efforts to support the Palestinians. These organizations aim to provide a wide range of support to the area from healthcare to political solutions.

### Governmental Support:

Many countries vocally support Palestine and declare Israel's actions a genocide. The European Union and many other countries try to support Palestine financially as well. Sending humanitarian aid, medical supplies, and basic needs such as food and shelter.

### Non-Governmental Support:

Numerous non-governmental organizations are actively involved in providing humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people.

The United Nations plays a crucial role as an aid provider. The UN supports peace negotiations and calls Israel to withdraw from unjustified occupied territories.

**UNRWA** (United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees) provides humanitarian aid and supports displaced Palestinians. Surprisingly, UNRWA has faced funding shortages. Despite this absurdity, UNRWA continues to advocate international support. **Doctors Without Borders** and **Palestine Children's Relief Fund** also provide medical support both in the short and long term.



**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



Organizations such as **Human Rights Watch** and **Amnesty International** are critical in showcasing the human rights violations in the region by investigating and publishing reports. This advocates accountability and justice on an international stage.

### Is It Enough?

As we enter the second year of this inhumane "conflict" it gets harder not to ask this question: Is it enough? Will it ever be enough? To end genocide, to end the misery of all those innocent people, children... Despite the efforts the answer seems to be a **"No"**. This "No" gets stronger as organizations face significant challenges such as political enforcement, funding constraints, and restrictions on access to the area.

Undoubtedly, every single attempt to help Palestine by both governmental and non-governmental organizations serves a great purpose. Despite this, to help the people of Palestine properly we need permanent and humane solutions.



## Diplomatic Developments In Favor of Palestine

The State of Palestine is recognised by 146 countries around the world. Mostly, countries in the Middle East, Africa and certain Asian countries recognize the Palestinian statehood. On the other hand, countries who can be considered as “great Western powers” such as the United States, Japan, Canada, South Korea and Australia do not recognize the State of Palestine. While it is important to highlight that a good amount of European states have recognized the Palestinian statehood throughout 2024, many of them still do not.

In the early years of the First Intifada, 1988, the State of Palestine was declared with Jerusalem as its capital by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Algeria was the first country ever to recognize the Palestinian statehood. Additionally, the European countries who have recognized the Palestinian state were mostly from the Soviet bloc. Türkiye was also one of the first countries in 1988 to recognize the State of Palestine. Most of the Turkic countries also recognized the Palestinian state after the dissolution of the USSR.



After the Oslo Accords in 1999, there was supposed to be an independent State of Palestine, however this resulted in the Second Intifada. Until 2014, there was still no Western European country that had recognized the Palestinian state. Sweden was the first country to do so. Nevertheless, the second decade of 2000s was not necessarily good enough for Palestine as the state's application for UN Membership got rejected. In 2012, UNGA voted in favor of changing Palestine's status to “non-member observer state”. While this is a big symbolic diplomatic success for Palestine, it is not enough.

In addition, in 2015, ICJ recognized Palestine as a party. The importance of this improvement can be understood by the example of South Africa-Israel-Palestine genocide case in ICJ.

In 2024, Norway, Spain and Ireland recognized the Palestine statehood. This is a huge diplomatic success considering that only 8 countries out of 27 EU members recognized the State of Palestine before. Following Norway, Spain and Ireland, Armenia and Slovenia also declared their recognition of Palestinian state on June.

Aside from countries recognizing Palestine, Palestine has been trying to get full membership in United Nations. However, so far it has been a very hard journey as even though the overwhelming majority of member states have voted in favor of Palestine membership, the United States can abolish the voting results and years of Palestinian hardwork by just using their veto right, which has been the case this year as well. UN Membership of Palestine is still discussed as well as recognition from Australia, France and the United Kingdom. These countries claim that as soon as the “conflict” is solved, they will recognize the State of Palestine when the timing is right. But isn't the right timing is right now? The right time is right now in order to give Palestinians a hope, and in order to contribute to the end of this genocide, and in order to stay in the right side of history.





## **Turkish Foreign Policy Regarding Palestine**

In the early Turkish Republic, Turkey was distanced from Palestine and the Arab world due to the secularization policies. During the Cold War period, Turkey was prioritizing their relations with Israel in order to counter Soviet influence. Thus, Turkey's policy on Palestine was mostly shaped by security concerns and alliances with the West. While Turkey maintained a neutral stance in Arab-Israeli conflicts, the strategy of countering Soviet influence led Turkey to recognize Israel in 1949. When we came to the 1980s, Turkish foreign policy regarding Israel and Palestine turned into a rather complex balancing act. As this was the case, this approach has been considered contradictory. For example, Turkey took a pro-Palestinian position by being active in Islamic conferences and officially recognized Palestine as a state in 1988, but at the same time continued to improve its relations with Israel.

The Oslo Peace Process between Israel and the Palestinians in the 1990s caused Turkey to develop its relations with Israel into a military partnership. During the Oslo process, Turkey was in contact with the Palestinian leadership directly. Although Turkish-Israeli relations grew stronger in the aspect of military cooperation in the 1990s, there has been a shift in Turkish foreign policy in the 2000s.

On 28 September 2000, there was an uprising called Al Aqsa intifada in which Palestinians resisted the visit of Likud Party leader Ariel Sharon who was accompanied by Israeli police. After that, daily protests started taking place in which many Palestinians were killed by the Israeli police. As the Oslo Peace process ended with the Palestinian uprising, Turkey's efforts of keeping the balance became harder.

With the aim of playing a mediating role in the Middle East, there have been efforts to bring Palestinian and Israeli parties together. Although Turkey had continuous trade relations with Israel, Turkey was still criticizing Israel due to its actions in Palestine. However, after the Gaza War in 2008, Turkish-Israeli relations took a downward turn.



Tensions between Turkey and Israel have increased after the 2010 Gaza Flotilla Incident. At the time, the Mavi Marmara ship was delivering aid to Gaza. Israeli forces killed ten Turkish activists aboard the Mavi Marmara ship. Turkish-Israeli relations worsened significantly with this event. Later on, Turkey's criticism of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been increased. Turkey has since condemned Israeli military actions in Gaza, settlement expansions, and other policies that Turkey views as violations of international law and Palestinian rights.



## Turkish Foreign Policy Regarding Palestine

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Turkey has consistently highlighted the Palestinian Cause in international forums. Turkey expressed opposition to policies such as the U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital during the Trump administration and called for greater international recognition of Palestinian statehood as a member of organizations like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Despite the support for Palestine, Turkey also sought to normalize relations with Israel if strategic interests are aligned. For example, Turkey and Israel have shared regional interests in the areas of energy and security. This shows the pragmatic approach in Turkish foreign policy. Although there have been efforts to restore diplomatic relations in recent years, complete normalization seems rather challenging without significant progress on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process as Turkey's support for Palestinian rights remains a cornerstone of its policy.

Beyond being a historical matter, this issue has a strategic importance in managing Turkey's relationships with Arab countries, Israel, and the West. As Turkey supports the Palestinian cause, Turkish governments gradually strengthen their legitimacy among Arab-Muslim populations by positioning themselves as defenders of Palestinian rights. Turkey's stance on the matter not only challenges Western influence in the region but also increases domestic support.

Backing the Palestinian cause is seen as proof of Turkey's "independent foreign policy". As there has been a distance between Turkey and Israel in diplomatic regard, there has been an improvement in Turkey's trade, tourism, and diplomatic relations with the Arab world considering the Palestinian cause is supported by the Arab nations. As Turkey continues to support the Palestinian cause, it becomes a more independent regional power.

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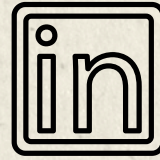


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