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The Palestine-Israel conflict: Islamic human rights and international relations perspective

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Abstract

The Palestine-Israel conflict is one of the most prolonged and complex international issues, encompassing political, historical, religious, and humanitarian dimensions. This study aims to analyze the conflict through the lens of International Relations and Islamic Human Rights, focusing on the dynamics of the conflict, human rights violations, and the relevance of Islamic human rights principles. The research adopts a qualitative case study approach by analyzing literature-based data from journals, books, news reports, and other sources. The central research question addresses how human rights violations in this conflict can be understood from the perspective of Islamic Human Rights. The findings reveal that the Palestine-Israel conflict reflects the complexities of international relations, where power dynamics among actors play a pivotal role in shaping the conflict's trajectory. Human rights violations—such as violence against civilians and restrictions on freedoms—not only contravene universal human rights principles but also Islamic values that uphold justice, peace, and human dignity. This study recommends more intensive efforts from the international community to pursue a sustainable peaceful resolution and to enforce human rights in the conflict zone in order to protect the rights of all involved parties.

Keywords: Palestine-Israel conflict; international relations; Islamic human rights; power dynamics; human rights violations; peaceful resolution

INTRODUCTION

The Palestine-Israel conflict is a prolonged and unresolved dispute that continues to lack a definitive resolution. It remains a major subject of concern in the Middle East, across the globe, and particularly within the Muslim world. Both sides have suffered significantly—from material losses to tens of thousands of lives, including those directly involved in the conflict as well as innocent civilians. This conflict has become a central issue in global political discourse throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, particularly within the broader context of Arab-Israeli hostilities. Historically, open warfare between Arabs and Israel began in 1948, involving nations such as Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Palestinian militias united against the Israeli state.

The roots of the Palestine-Israel conflict are deep and multifaceted, with a variety of complex causes. Internally, the conflict stems from the Palestinians' struggle for independence and resistance against Israeli occupation, as well as Israel's desire to maintain its territorial integrity. Externally, the involvement of powerful actors, especially the United States in its support of Israel, significantly influences the conflict's course. The establishment of the state of Israel itself intensified disputes over land ownership, fueling wars in surrounding Arab regions.

The international community has long viewed this prolonged conflict as a grave issue and a shared responsibility among nations. One of the most recent developments is the ongoing conflict that has lasted over a year between Hamas forces and Israel's military onslaught. This confrontation has prompted global protests demanding more concrete action from world governments. It has also given rise to a global boycott movement targeting products suspected of financially supporting Israel. The United Nations, as the highest international body, has attempted to pass resolutions regarding the conflict, some of which have been approved by member states. However, the UN Security Council's veto system allows five permanent members to override any resolution. The United States has frequently used its veto power to defend Israel, nullifying various peace efforts.

The Israeli military assaults on Palestinian territory cannot be justified as acts of self-defense, as often portrayed in mainstream media. A closer examination reveals that these attacks violate international humanitarian law, particularly in targeting civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, food and water sources, and houses of worship—facilities that are protected under humanitarian regulations. As of today, large portions of Gaza and Palestinian land lie in ruins, with little remaining of the once-standing infrastructure. Israel's repeated human rights violations directly contradict the humanitarian principles espoused in Islam. Notably, long before modern international humanitarian law emerged, Islam had already outlined ethical guidelines for warfare. In light of these complex international dynamics, this study seeks to explore how international relations and Islamic human rights frameworks interpret and respond to the ongoing conflict in Palestine.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The Palestine-Israel conflict from the perspective of Islamic international relations

The Palestine-Israel conflict involves numerous international actors with diverse interests and represents one of the most intricate and protracted conflicts in modern history. From the standpoint of Islamic international relations, this conflict is seen as a direct challenge to the principles of justice (*al-'adālah*) and peace (*al-salām*) embedded in Islamic teachings. It encompasses political, ideological, and theological dimensions that transcend national borders. The Qur'an explicitly addresses the need for impartial justice, as articulated in *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5:8):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا فَوَّامِينَ لِلّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۝ وَلَا يَجْرِمُنَّكُمْ شَهَانُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَا تَعْدِلُوا ۝ اَعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۝ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۝ إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

"O you who believe! Be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just: that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is fully aware of what you do."

This verse underscores the imperative of upholding justice, even toward those whom one may dislike. In the context of the Palestine-Israel conflict, Muslims are reminded not to let animosity cloud their commitment to justice. Justice must be upheld irrespective of background or political allegiance. Concepts such as *Dār al-Ta‘awun* (realm of cooperation) highlight the significance of intergovernmental cooperation and dialogue in seeking mutual benefit and peaceful resolution.

Muslim-majority countries, through the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), have consistently voiced support for Palestine and condemned Israel's violations of human rights. However, differing political and economic interests among OIC member states often hinder unified action. Despite these challenges, diplomatic initiatives and humanitarian assistance continue to be advanced by various Muslim nations to support the Palestinian cause.

The conflict's impact on regional stability is especially evident in the Middle East. Tensions between Israel and neighboring states—such as Lebanon, Syria, and Iran—frequently escalate into military confrontations that risk spreading across borders. Furthermore, the conflict has caused divisions within the Muslim world. While some countries actively support Palestine, others adopt neutral stances or discreetly align with Israel, undermining collective efforts toward peaceful resolution and regional harmony.

Globally, the conflict influences political and economic dynamics. Given the Middle East's role as a major energy supplier, prolonged instability has the potential to disrupt global oil prices. Additionally, the conflict creates diplomatic rifts among world powers, such as the United States, Russia, and the European Union, which pursue differing interests and alliances in the region. These divergences may hinder broader international cooperation on unrelated global issues.

The humanitarian and social consequences of the conflict are also profound. Ongoing violence has triggered a refugee crisis, forcing thousands to flee and seek asylum in neighboring countries. This exodus places immense strain on host nations tasked with providing humanitarian aid and integrating displaced populations. Images of suffering and destruction, widely disseminated through global media, provoke emotional responses and civil protests that can destabilize domestic politics elsewhere.

From the Islamic international relations perspective, resolving the Palestine-Israel conflict must rest on the principles of justice and peace as taught in Islam. This includes upholding human rights, protecting civilians, and pursuing equitable solutions for all stakeholders. Such an approach is expected to break the cycle of violence and foster conditions conducive to sustainable regional and global stability.

One of the most significant diplomatic efforts in managing the Palestine-Israel conflict has been carried out by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). As a collective platform for Muslim-majority countries, the OIC plays a mediatory role by prioritizing Islamic principles such as *al-‘adālah* (justice) and *al-salām* (peace) in its diplomatic strategies. Through various summits and resolutions, the OIC endeavors to unify the Muslim world in advocating for Palestinian rights and promoting peaceful negotiations with Israel.

In line with this, the principle of *al-ta‘awun* (cooperation) offers a viable diplomatic framework to resolve the conflict. This principle emphasizes the necessity of collaboration between disputing parties to achieve shared welfare and long-term peace. In the context of the Palestine-Israel conflict, such cooperation could be manifested

through joint economic initiatives and infrastructure development projects that benefit both sides, reducing dependency on armed confrontation.

The diplomatic roles of other Muslim nations are also crucial in peacebuilding efforts. Indonesia, for instance, has been an active proponent of Palestinian sovereignty through both political diplomacy and humanitarian aid. As the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, Indonesia consistently supports Palestinian independence and encourages peaceful dialogue between the two parties. Indonesia's involvement in international forums, including the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement, reflects its commitment to advocating for Palestinian rights on the global stage.

Nonetheless, diplomatic efforts often encounter significant challenges due to diverging interests and perspectives among the stakeholders. These differences can stall negotiation processes and weaken collective action. Therefore, approaches grounded in Islamic values—emphasizing justice, equity, and collaboration—are essential in achieving a lasting and just solution. By upholding these values, there is a growing belief that the Palestine-Israel conflict can be resolved peacefully, in accordance with the teachings of Islam and the principles of harmonious international relations.

Human Rights Violations in the Palestine-Israel Conflict

One of the most frequently reported human rights violations in this conflict is the use of violence against civilians. Israeli military operations often target residential areas, schools, and hospitals, resulting in numerous civilian casualties, including women and children. These attacks violate the principles of proportionality and distinction under the laws of armed conflict, which are designed to safeguard non-combatants from the effects of war.

The forced displacement of Palestinian residents is another critical issue. Israel systematically confiscates Palestinian land through illegal settlement policies in the West Bank and East Jerusalem (Aditya Dewantara et al., 2023). Many families are evicted without fair compensation, in direct contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the forcible transfer of populations in occupied territories.

Moreover, the blockade imposed on Gaza has severely deteriorated living conditions for more than two million residents. Israel's stringent restrictions on the movement of goods and people have led to shortages of food, medicine, and fuel. This blockade constitutes a form of collective punishment, prohibited under international law, as it disproportionately affects civilians who are not directly involved in hostilities.

Palestinians' freedom of movement is also heavily restricted. Thousands of checkpoints and separation barriers erected by Israel in the West Bank hinder daily access to schools, workplaces, and healthcare services. These limitations violate the right to freedom of movement and indirectly infringe on other fundamental rights such as education, employment, and health.

Violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians continues to escalate. Numerous reports document incidents where settlers, often under the protection of Israeli forces, attack Palestinian farmers, set fire to their fields, and destroy homes and property. These acts are rarely prosecuted, contributing to a culture of impunity.

Additionally, many Palestinian children are subjected to arbitrary detention by Israeli authorities. Human rights organizations report that hundreds of minors are arrested annually—often without formal charges and with limited access to legal counsel. These children are frequently subjected to abuse and inhumane treatment,

violating the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Islamic teachings also emphasize the humane treatment of prisoners (*al-asrā*), prohibiting any form of physical or psychological torture.

Journalists and humanitarian workers have also become frequent targets. Many Palestinian journalists have been killed or injured while covering events in conflict zones. Attacks on media personnel represent serious violations of press freedom and the public's right to information. Similarly, humanitarian aid workers often face threats or are harmed during their missions to assist civilians.

Widespread discrimination against Palestinians exacerbates the humanitarian crisis. Palestinians living within Israel face systemic inequalities in employment, education, and access to basic services. In the West Bank and Gaza, restrictive Israeli policies hinder the ability of Palestinians to obtain building permits or operate businesses. Peaceful demonstrators are often met with excessive force, including live ammunition and tear gas, resulting in deaths and serious injuries.

Extrajudicial killings by Israeli security forces have also been widely documented. Numerous Palestinians have been shot dead despite posing no immediate threat. In many cases, investigations are not conducted or fail to hold perpetrators accountable, reinforcing a pattern of impunity. Islamic principles, much like humanitarian law, clearly differentiate between combatants and non-combatants, and strictly prohibit the killing of innocent individuals.

Airstrikes and large-scale military operations in densely populated areas of Gaza have killed thousands, including women and children, and have destroyed critical infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, and power grids. Such indiscriminate attacks contravene international humanitarian law by failing to ensure the protection of civilians. Collective punishment tactics—such as demolishing the homes of suspected militants' families—violate international legal standards and inflict suffering on innocent individuals.

Another grave violation is the exploitation of natural resources in occupied territories. Palestinians in the West Bank face severe restrictions in accessing clean water, with many communities forced to purchase water at inflated prices, while Israeli settlers enjoy far easier access. Reports also highlight sexual harassment and abuse of detained Palestinian women in Israeli prisons, which contravenes international human rights standards protecting the dignity and safety of prisoners.

Attacks on places of worship, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, further inflame tensions. Israeli security forces have repeatedly stormed the mosque complex and injured worshippers. These actions not only infringe on the right to religious freedom but also aggravate sectarian divisions in the region. Islam prohibits the destruction of any structure on earth without justification, especially places of worship. The widespread devastation currently seen in Palestine reflects a form of scorched-earth policy explicitly condemned in Islamic teachings.

Beyond Israel's direct actions, the international community has also been criticized for its failure to enforce justice. Many United Nations resolutions condemning human rights violations in Palestine remain unimplemented due to vetoes from major powers. This inability to uphold international law has deepened the suffering of Palestinians and undermined faith in global governance mechanisms.

Efforts to resolve the conflict are often obstructed by an imbalance of power between Israel and Palestine. Despite numerous peace negotiations, Israel continues to

expand illegal settlements, while Palestinians face ongoing loss of land and rights. This reality undermines the feasibility of a two-state solution.

Human rights violations in this conflict represent not only a political crisis but a profound humanitarian tragedy. The international community, human rights organizations, and justice-oriented states must persist in pressuring Israel to end its violations and comply with international law. The situation in Palestine underscores the urgent need for unified global action to end injustice and ensure the protection of Palestinian rights. Without decisive steps to halt violence and restore justice, the conflict will persist and inflict suffering on future generations.

CONCLUSION

The ongoing Palestine-Israel conflict has captured the attention of the international community, particularly regarding issues of security, economic impact, and the broader question of upholding humanitarian values. The repeated assaults by Israel on Palestinian territories can no longer be justified as acts of self-defense in response to Hamas-led resistance movements. The destruction and losses—both economic and human—suffered by the Palestinian people represent a humanitarian catastrophe that demands urgent global attention.

The human rights violations committed by Israeli forces must continue to be closely scrutinized by the international community, especially by the Muslim world, as they have crossed the moral and ethical boundaries established in Islam. From the perspective of Islamic teachings and international law, such violations are in direct contradiction with the values of justice and dignity.

Within the framework of international relations, individuals as non-state actors also have a role to play in advocating for justice. Campaigns to raise awareness and demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinian cause—such as boycott movements, educational initiatives, and humanitarian support—should be actively promoted. Although the failure of the United Nations to effectively resolve this conflict, partly due to the misuse of veto power, has led to widespread disillusionment, it should not deter collective efforts to uphold the rights of the Palestinian people.

Justice and peace remain essential goals. The global community—particularly those who uphold human rights and religious values—must persist in pressuring for a peaceful and equitable resolution. Without sustained and principled international action, the conflict will continue to claim innocent lives and erode the moral conscience of humanity.

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