



**The Situation in the Middle East,
Including the Palestinian Question**

Letter from the Executive Board

Greetings Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the United Nations Security Council. As the Executive Board, we are honored to guide this committee and witness the passion, diplomacy, and research that each of you will bring to the discussion.

The agenda before us, **“The Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question,”** is one of the most complex and long-standing issues in international relations. It involves questions of peace, security, humanitarian protection, self-determination, sovereignty, and the role of the international community in achieving lasting stability.

As delegates, you are expected to approach this committee with seriousness, respect, and a strong commitment to diplomacy. We encourage you to study the historical background, understand the present realities on the ground, and analyze the positions of the countries you represent. Only through careful preparation and constructive debate can meaningful solutions be developed.

This background guide has been prepared to assist you in your research and to provide you with a foundation for informed discussion. However, it is only the starting point. We strongly encourage you to go beyond the guide, consult reliable sources, and develop a deep understanding of the issue.

We hope this committee will be marked by thoughtful debate, strong leadership, and genuine cooperation. We look forward to seeing each delegate contribute meaningfully to the Security Council’s work.

If you have any questions or require clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the Executive Board.

Wishing you a productive and successful committee session.

Sincerely,

The Executive Board

United Nations Security Council

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Introduction

The agenda item “The Situation in the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question” has been on the United Nations Security Council’s docket for decades, reflecting its centrality to international peace and security. It brings together a complex set of political, legal and humanitarian questions that remain unresolved and continue to generate periodic crises with global repercussions.

For the purposes of a Model United Nations simulation, this background guide is intended to provide a structured, neutral overview of the agenda. It outlines key historical developments, current dynamics, the United Nations’ role, and the core issues that typically arise in Council deliberations, without prescribing specific national positions.

Committee Overview

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the principal organ charged with maintaining international peace and security under the UN Charter. It consists of fifteen members and is empowered to adopt binding resolutions, impose sanctions and, where necessary, authorize measures to restore peace. All Member States are obligated to comply with decisions of the Council.

When addressing the situation in the Middle East, the Council acts both as a forum for political debate and as a decision-making body capable of shaping international responses to crises. It meets under this agenda item in various formats—open briefings, debates, formal meetings for adoption of decisions, and informal consultations of the whole.

Historical Background

The Council’s engagement with the Middle East dates back to the mid- twentieth century, when conflicts in the region first appeared on its agenda following the end of the Second World War and the dissolution of former mandate territories. Early deliberations concerned ceasefires, armistice agreements and the status of territories affected by armed conflict.

Over time, separate agenda items dealing with specific aspects of the regional situation were consolidated and broadened, culminating in the current formulation: “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. This formulation reflects the recognition that the Palestinian question is deeply intertwined with wider regional dynamics and cannot be considered in isolation from broader issues of peace and security in the Middle East.

Current Situation in the Middle East

The agenda today encompasses multiple, overlapping challenges: recurrent violence, fragile ceasefires, humanitarian emergencies, and persistent political deadlock. The Council regularly hears briefings on civilian casualties, displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and restrictions affecting access to essential services. These humanitarian concerns are closely linked to the broader security environment and the absence of a comprehensive political settlement.

The Palestinian question remains at the core of the agenda. It raises unresolved issues of self-determination, statehood, rights, and the status of territories whose future is contested. At the same time, developments elsewhere in the region—including tensions, armed confrontations, and proxy rivalries—feed into and are affected by the state of the Palestinian question, reinforcing the need for a holistic view of the situation.^{press.un+1}

UN Involvement and Past Actions

The United Nations has been involved in the Middle East and the Palestinian question through multiple organs, mechanisms and instruments. The General Assembly has adopted resolutions on the future government of Palestine and on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, while the Security Council has addressed ceasefires, occupation, and the protection of civilians through its own resolutions and statements.

To support implementation and monitor the situation, the UN has deployed peacekeeping and observer missions, received regular reports from envoys and special coordinators, and relied on humanitarian agencies such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to brief the Council on civilian needs and access constraints. The Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council documents these actions in detail, summarizing resolutions, presidential statements and other decisions taken under this agenda item.

Core Issues and Fault Lines

Several recurring issues shape debates under this agenda:

Questions of self-determination and political status, particularly as they relate to the Palestinian people and their future governance arrangements.

Questions of sovereignty, territorial control and occupation, including the legal implications of control over land and resources without internationally recognized settlement of status.

Questions of rights and protection, encompassing civilian protection, humanitarian access, and adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law.

Fault lines emerge around differing interpretations of international law, competing narratives about responsibility for violence, and disagreements over the sequencing and content of political solutions. These divisions often influence voting patterns and the ability of the Council to reach consensus, including on whether and how to adopt new resolutions under this agenda.un+1

Regional Dynamics Beyond Palestine

While the Palestinian question is explicitly referenced in the agenda title, the item also serves as a framework for considering broader regional dynamics. The Council's debates under this item frequently touch on tensions between different actors, cross-border security concerns, and the risk that localized crises may escalate into wider regional confrontations.

Issues such as arms flows, regional alliances, and proxy conflicts contribute to an environment in which developments in one part of the Middle East can rapidly affect stability elsewhere. Council members therefore often stress that addressing the Palestinian question is important not only in its own right, but also as a component of wider efforts to reduce conflict and build durable regional stability.

Guiding Questions for Delegates

In a Model United Nations simulation of this agenda, delegates should focus on broad, Council-relevant questions that help structure debate and inform draft resolutions, without prescribing specific country policies. Examples include:

How can the Security Council strengthen efforts to reduce immediate threats to civilians and protect critical infrastructure in the areas affected by this agenda?

In what ways can the Council encourage renewed political dialogue and negotiations that address both the Palestinian question and wider regional security concerns?

How should the Council balance short- term responses to crises—such as calls for ceasefire or humanitarian corridors—with long- term measures aimed at a just, lasting and comprehensive peace?

What role should UN mechanisms—peace operations, special coordinators, and humanitarian agencies—play in monitoring developments and supporting implementation of Council decisions under this agenda?

How can Council members use this agenda item to reinforce respect for the UN Charter, international humanitarian law and human rights law in the Middle East?

Delegates are encouraged to use these guiding questions to frame speeches, working papers and draft resolutions, ensuring that proposals remain grounded in UN practice and focused on the Council's mandate, rather than on prescriptive instructions to any particular state.