PALESTINE ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION IN PALESTINE AS OF JULY 2016
The fractious and polarized nature of the political and social situation present in Palestine is the result of ideological differences in objectives, governance, and relations with Israel. The decades long Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as other historical factors going back to the British Mandate period have encouraged the development of a fragmented, repressive, unstable, and overall ineffective political structure with respect to the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) in the West Bank. Palestine as a territory, as a political entity, and as a governing structure has been formed in the turmoil of this ever developing conflict and seems likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The population of Palestine faces a number of detriments to their civil and human rights not only from their own governments but also from Israeli occupation. The current president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, who’s term officially ended in 2009, is still in power as there has not been a presidential election since 2005. There are presently two distinct governing bodies that maintain control in Palestine and both are at odds with one another despite repeated attempts at reconciliation. These two governments are the Palestinian Authority, headed by Abbas’ Fatah political party governing the Palestinian portions of the West Bank, and Hamas, which de facto administers the Gaza Strip. This dichotomy of governing institutions has produced a highly restrictive political environment for the Palestinian citizenry and greatly obstructs any efforts to consolidate recognition of authority.
Palestine has a long and contentious history involving many parties, state actors, and competing national interests. The area now known as Palestine, during the 19th century, was ruled over by the Ottoman Empire and records from this time indicate that the population was 87% Muslim, 10% Christian, and 3% Jewish. Ottoman Palestine was a place wherein people of different religious faiths lived relatively peacefully alongside one another. In 1917, near the end of World War I, the British Government issued the Balfour Declaration which called for the creation of a “national home for the Jewish people.” This was indicative of problems to come as the British Government, by way of one official or another, had therefore promised the area then known as Palestine to the Zionists (a growing nationalist movement for the reestablishment of a Jewish homeland), the Meccans (in exchange for an Arab revolt against the Ottomans), and to themselves (during negotiations with the French with respect to how the two governments would divide up the Ottoman territories after the war was won). After the Ottoman Empire dissolved following World War I the victorious European States partitioned its territories into new states via the League of Nations mandates. These mandates included the creation of Mandatory Palestine under British civil administration which operated from 1920 to 1948. During this time, the British decided to establish separate institutions for Muslims, Christians, and Jews which provided disincentives for these groups to cooperate and easier for the British to “divide and rule” the inhabitants of Palestine. Meanwhile the British utilized the Balfour Declaration to encourage Jewish immigration into the area and, during the period from 1920 to 1939, the Jewish population of Palestine increased by over 320,000 people. Suddenly, by 1938, Jews made up about 30% of the population of Palestine. The growing Jewish population began to implement a policy in which they bought land from absentee non-Palestinian Arab landowners and then evicted the Palestinian farmers who were living and working on the properties. By maintaining control over both land and labor the Jewish population attempted to create a more secure situation for their communities within Palestine. However, these practices heightened tensions between the Jewish settlers and the native Arab Palestinians during the 1920s and 1930s. As these practices continued and the rise of nationalism reached the native populations living in Palestine the idea of a Palestinian State became more popular and this growing sense of nationalism exploded in 1936 when Palestinians revolted against British rule. The British, along with help from Jewish militias, brutally
suppressed the Palestinian revolt but in the aftermath of such destructive violence issued the White Paper of 1939 which limited Jewish immigration to Palestine and called for the establishment of a joint Arab-Jewish state in Palestine within 10 years. This upset all factions involved as the Zionists were displeased by this limitation of immigration during a time when Jews were seeking to leave Europe at unprecedented rates and the Arab Palestinians felt marginalized as they now had to wait 10 years to gain statehood. As World War II flared up and the plan faced opposition on all fronts the British scrapped the idea. In the years immediately following World War II the British decided that colonies or mandates such as Palestine were proving to be too expensive and passed the issue of Palestine to the newly created United Nations. The United Nations, in 1947, voted to divide Palestine into separate Palestinian and Jewish states. This led to an escalation of violence eventually developing into the 1948 Arab-Israeli war which took place between the Israelis, the Palestinians, and many Arab states loyal to the Palestinian pursuit of statehood. The Israelis won the war and by 1949, when an armistice was signed, Israel occupied over 30% more territory than they would have if the war had not been fought. Meanwhile, Egypt had gained control over the Gaza Strip and the nation of Jordan had annexed the West Bank as well as the Old City of Jerusalem. In a mass exodus that became known as the “Nakba,” or “the catastrophe,” these occupations caused over 700,000 Palestinians to flee their
homes and become refugees in the surrounding Arab lands. Today, this conflict is remembered by Israelis to be the beginning of their nation, but to Palestinians stands a humiliating and infuriating chapter of their history wherein they lost much of their homeland, identity, and also pushed them further from statehood. Nothing changed territorially during the next 18 years but there was significant development at this time in the political organization for the Palestinian cause as is exemplified in the founding of the Fatah movement, in 1959, by members of the Palestinian diaspora as well as the founding of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in 1964, that was led by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. The PLO utilized both nonviolent and violent tactics, including the training and mobilization of militia groups that attacked civilians, to pursue their goal of a Palestinian state and meanwhile the Israeli Government ramped up the establishment of Jewish settlements in what had been Palestinian territory including East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. In 1967, Israel and several Arab states again went to war in a conflict that became known as the Six-Day War. As the fighting concluded Israel once again emerged victorious and gained control of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, and
the Golan heights. On November 22, 1967, in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, the UN passed Resolution 242 which outlined a basic framework for achieving peace in the region including Israel withdrawing from the territory acquired in the war and all participants recognizing the rights of both a Palestinian and an Israeli state to exist. This mutual recognition failed to fully manifest and after the war the broader Arab-Israeli conflict transformed into the more specific Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has since been the foremost impetus for Palestinian political and social society. It has been referred to as the “world’s most intractable conflict” as Israel has maintained its occupation of Palestine for 49 years. The Fatah movement, in 1969, officially declared that they were not fighting against Jews in a general fashion but against Israel as a racist and theocratic entity. The PLO issued a similar resolution within the same year and specified the secular nature of their organization by stating that the PLO’s main objective was to establish a free and democratic society in Palestine for all Palestinians whether they were Muslims, Christians, or Jews. This is the earliest period in which we can recognize the conditions of this conflict as they exist today. In 1970 the Arab League, for the first time, affirmed the right of the Palestinian people to complete self-determination and stated that Jordan, who had claimed the West Bank at this time, should relinquish control of the area to the PLO. The Ten Point Plan, adopted by the PLO in 1974, called for the establishment of a democratic, bi-national, Israeli-Palestinian state and this became known as the “one-state solution.” It also called for the implementation of Palestinian authority in all of its liberated territory. Many members of the PLO at this time saw this as more of a move toward a “two-state solution” and split from Arafat and other mainstream PLO members to become the Rejectionist Front and this split is, in some ways, still evident today. This “one-state solution” plan ultimately fell apart. The Rabat summit conference, also in 1974, saw Jordan and the other members of the Arab League officially recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and finally relinquish their role as representatives of the West Bank. During negotiations between Israel and Egypt at Camp David, in 1978, Anwar Sadat proposed the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel, however, refused this outright. In 1982, U.S. President Ronald Reagan called for a freeze on Israeli settlement and supported full autonomy for Palestinians in political union with Jordan. The Amman Agreement in 1985 declared that Jordan
and the PLO would pursue a confederation between a proposed Palestinian state and the Jordanian state and, in 1988, King Hussein of Jordan officially renounced the Jordanian claim to the West Bank and the PLO assumed responsibility as the Provisional Government of Palestine and declared themselves as an independent state. This declaration was approved by the Palestinian National Council (PNC) on November 15, 1988 and Yasser Arafat assumed the title of President of Palestine. Via the same declaration the PNC empowered its central council to form a government in exile when appropriate and commissioned the Executive Committee (EC) to perform the duties necessary until its establishment. In 1994, under the terms of the Oslo Accords, signed between the PLO and Israel, the PLO assumed control over the Jericho area of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and Israel withdrew its forces from much of the West Bank. To carry out administrative functions on the ground in these areas, the PLO created a new temporary interim body called the Palestinian National Authority (PNA or PA). In 2005, Israel implemented a unilateral disengagement plan with respect to the Gaza Strip which resulted in the removal of Israeli forces and settlements and the transfer of power in Gaza to the PA with the exception of its borders, territorial waters, and airspace. This shifting of authority increased the percentage of land in the Gaza strip governed by the PA from about 60% to 100%. In the 2006 parliamentary elections Hamas, a fundamentalist Islamist political party, won major legislative victories and gained a majority within the Palestinian Legislative Council and nominated Ismail Haniyeh as Prime Minister. In 2007, tensions between Hamas and Fatah escalated into violent conflict, primarily in the Gaza Strip, and led to the collapse of the PA government in Gaza. In response to this Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas dismissed the Hamas-led government and appointed a sympathetic Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad, to shore up support. As Hamas seized the Gaza Strip the PA’s authority became limited to the West Bank despite its claims that its authority extends over all Palestinian territories. The PA budget mainly consists of various aid programs and support from the Arab League while the Hamas government became highly dependent on Iran until the breakout of the Arab Spring. Beginning in 2011, after a two year impasse with respect to negotiations with Israel, the PA renewed their efforts to attain recognition as a full member state in the UN. Competing international interests within the Security Council, particularly by the United States, ultimately defeated the application for recognition of Palestine as a state.
and UN membership. In 2012, as their application for full membership had halted, Palestinian representatives decided instead to apply for an upgrade to their status from an “observer entity” to “non-member observer state” and on November 29, 2012 in a 138-9 vote the UN adopted the resolution and officially upgraded Palestine to “non-member observer state” status. This is seen as a de facto recognition of the sovereign state of Palestine and a blow to Israel and the United States as both had vehemently opposed the resolution. This recognition of Palestinian sovereignty is extremely important as it allows Palestine to join treaties, co-sponsor resolutions, and other specialized UN functions. It also opens the door for Palestine to join influential bodies such as the World Bank, the World Health Organization, and the World Trade Organization. In fact, on June 22nd, 2016 Palestine’s Minister of National Economy, Abeer Odeh, announced that Palestine will indeed request to join the WTO at some time in the near future. It is important to note that Palestine may also now join the International Criminal Court and has accused Israel of war crimes in Gaza. The UN can now also assist in the affirmation of Palestinian borders that Israel occupied in 1967 and, as a sovereign state, Palestine could technically claim legal jurisdiction and rights over its air space and territorial waters. As of January 2013, Palestine refers to itself both in the international arena and in all other official designations as the State of Palestine. Currently, the position of the PA is that all of the West Bank as well as the Gaza strip should constitute the structure of the State of Palestine. The Israeli government, however, claims that the area is subject to future negotiations and has pointed out that the Hamas government’s position is that Palestine, including all of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel, are by right an Islamic State. Israel also states that it is essential to Israeli security that a Palestinian “entity” not have all the attributes of a state in case of the development of a powerful and nearby enemy and that the official position of the Israeli government is that Palestine not complete its transition into full statehood. Instead, Israel declares that Palestine should be a self-administering entity with partial sovereignty not extending to full control of its borders and citizens. Palestinians have been wholly resistant to the acceptance of a territorially disjointed state and feel that they have already compromised a great deal by accepting a state composed of only the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. They also believe that the current level of Israeli militarization in their territory and the level of restrictions imposed by Israel make a viable State of Palestine impossible.
The West Bank is a landlocked area that includes East Jerusalem and makes up the majority of the Palestinian territories and the State of Palestine. The territory is divided into 3 main sections designated as Areas A, B, and C. There are currently around 3 million Palestinians living in the West Bank as well as roughly 400,000 Israeli settlers and 200,000 Jewish Israelis in East Jerusalem. The Israeli government currently occupies the West Bank and exercises near total control over the Palestinian population living there with the exception of limited Palestinian authority over civil affairs. Freedom of movement around the West Bank is severely limited by over 500 Israeli roadblocks and movement in and out of the West Bank is tightly controlled and maintained via a wall that the Israelis call the “security fence” or “West Bank barrier,” while Palestinians generally refer to it as the “wall of apartheid.”

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has stated that 40% of the West Bank is used for Israeli infrastructure. This infrastructure consists of Israeli declared nature reserves, military bases, settlements, the barrier, and roads all of which are either completely off-limits to Palestinians or firmly controlled by Israeli forces.

### Area A (Urban Areas)(Administered by PA)
Both security and civil administration in Area A of the West Bank are under the authority of the PA. Area A makes up roughly 18% of the land area and is home to 55% of the Palestinians living in the West Bank.

### Area B (Rural Areas)(Administered by PA)(Secured by Israel)
In Area B, the security situation is under the control of Israeli security forces while the civil administration is maintained by the PA. Area B comprises about 21% of the West Bank territory and 41% of the Palestinian population in the West Bank.

### Area C (Divides A and B)(Israeli Control)
Area C divides Areas A and B from one another which are divided into 227 separate areas wherein 199 of them are smaller than 2 square kilometers. Both security and civil administration here is rigidly controlled by Israeli authorities. Area C makes up the remaining 61% of land in the West Bank, encompasses all of the Israeli settlements, and contains all of the basic resources Palestinians need to develop a viable state such as water springs, quarries, arable land, and sites of touristic value.
The Gaza Strip is a small piece of land of only 365 km² bordering Egypt and separated from the West Bank by Israeli territory. It is currently internally administered by the Hamas government. However, control of the airspace, borders, and territorial sea belongs to Israel. Currently, Egypt and Israel maintain a blockade of the Gaza Strip and only allow limited amounts of medical humanitarian aid and, more recently, some construction materials. Israel claims that this blockade is of the utmost importance to its security as it is the most effective way to prevent Palestinian rocket attacks from the area and to prevent Hamas from gaining access to other weapons. Due to the blockade, the population is not free to enter or exit the Gaza Strip and has been described by numerous politicians and human rights leaders as a, “prison-camp or open air prison for its collective denizens.” Since 2007, when Hamas seized power in Gaza and the blockade was implemented, Gaza has experienced steady economic decline. This has had grave humanitarian consequences for its population of 1.7 million people such as dramatically decreased food security, unemployment, reduced access to clean water, reduction in medical equipment and supplies, and even the closure of sewage pumping facilities. Israel claims that it has, over the last few years, taken measures to ease the restrictions on the Gazan border crossings. However, this claim has been disputed by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights in a report released in January, 2016.
As of this writing, there are two major political parties holding power in the Palestinian territories; these are Fatah, which dominates the Palestinian unity government, also known as the Palestinian National Authority (PA), and maintains control over Palestinian territory in the West Bank, and Hamas, which is de facto controlling the Gaza Strip. The United States, Israel, and the European Union do not recognize the Hamas government and instead support the PA government in the West Bank headed by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah.

Fatah, founded in 1959 by Yasser Arafat and other members of the Palestinian diaspora, is a secular political party and makes up the majority of the confederated multi-party Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The party has officially declared that they are not fighting against Jews in a general fashion but against Israel as a racist and theocratic entity. The PLO operates under a similar resolution and has specified the secular nature of the organization by stating that the PLO’s main objective is to establish a free and democratic society in Palestine for all Palestinians whether they are Muslims, Christians, or Jews. Since Arafat’s death in 2004 the ideologically diverse party has seen increased factionalism and splitting wherein groups that are breaking ranks with the party cite entrenched corruption and ineffective leadership.
Hamas, formed in early 1988, was created as the armed wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza. The Hamas Charter is viciously anti-semitic and the party is strongly dedicated to eradicating Palestine of Jews. Hamas is not officially recognized within the PLO but was the clear winner of the 2006 parliamentary elections which demonstrated an indisputable general lack of confidence in the PLO leadership. This election led to the Hams-Fatah split wherein the PA lost control of the Gaza Strip, which is now under the de facto civil administration of Hamas. Israel, as well as the United States, considers membership with the group to be illegal and its military branch, along with the handful of charities it oversees, as a terrorist organization. Hamas has denied that it forcibly imposes fundamentalist Islamic law on the citizens of Gaza, specifically the Islamic dress code, but there are a plethora of reports that the organization has indeed increased the implementation of Sharia law since the closure and isolation of the Gaza Strip by Israel in 2007. Hamas also maintains operative cells and influence within the West Bank and has attempted impose their edicts there as well including the banning of music which has been called, by various human rights organizations, Taliban-like attempts to censor society.

When Hamas won the parliamentary elections in 2006 tensions between the incompatible ideologies present within Fatah and Hamas with regard to the functional behavior of the Palestinian Authority erupted into violent factional conflict. When the two parties failed to reach a deal to share government power the PA split into two polities, each claiming to be the sole authentic representative of the Palestinian people. By the end of 2007, the Fatah party maintained rule within the PA and kept control over the West Bank while Hamas established its own de-facto government in Gaza. The Fatah-Hamas conflict is seen as a main source of the limitations of freedom of speech especially in regard to freedom of the press. In July 2010 Israel eased the blockade of the Gaza Strip for a time and allowed the distribution of pro-Fatah publications but Hamas prevented Gazan distributors from receiving the shipments. Meanwhile, the PA is vigorously repressive of opposing voices and according to the Ramallah-based Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms, in 2011, there were more attacks on the Palestinian press from the PA than by Israel.
As of July 2016, despite a plethora of attempts since 2006 to develop concrete reconciliatory measures, Fatah and Hamas have not been successful in this pursuit. Israel, the United States, and major portions of the international community have effectively opposed such reconciliation and, in 2009, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Israel will never accept Hamas as a negotiating partner and would not make peace with the Hamas political faction even if Fatah-Hamas reconciliation is achieved. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has been under consistent pressure to prevent such rapprochement making successful efforts to unify the parties nearly impossible. In June 2014, the Palestinian Unity Government was formed in an agreement between the two factions, but was seen as illegal and after a prolonged argument about the term of expiration for this governing body the Palestinian Unity Government resigned in June 2015, under protest from Hamas, as President Abbas claimed that the government could not operate in the Gaza Strip. The most recent talks, hosted in Doha, Qatar in June 2016, were part of a larger plan by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to renew direct negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian parties. On June 18, both Fatah and Hamas announced that the talks had failed due to two major contributing factors; the lack of national will to end the division and external influences such as Israeli pressure on President Abbas not to reconcile with the Hamas faction as it continues its refusal to recognize Israel’s right to exist.
As of this writing, there have not been parliamentary elections in Palestine since 2006 or presidential elections since 2005. Local elections are intended to take place every 4 years and were held in 2005 but were never finalized due to conflict between Fatah and Hamas and did not include more than 25% of the Palestinian citizenry. In 2010 local elections again faltered as Fatah could not agree on a viable list of candidates and the elections were called off. In October, 2012 the Palestinian territories held local elections wherein only 92 of the West Bank’s 353 municipalities actually had voting occur as more than 80 villages were unable to produce candidate lists. Hamas has claimed that this is a symptom of Fatah intimidation. In another 181 districts only one candidate was registered making voting irrelevant. The Hamas Government in Gaza refuses to recognize these elections as a legitimate expression of the Palestinian people’s will and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights has also questioned the legitimacy of these elections and has stated that there is a limiting of public freedoms and continuing widespread violations of human rights by the Palestinian Authority. In January 2016, Hamas declared that it was ready and willing to participate in elections for the PLO’s National Council but Fatah, in the form of high ranking Fatah leader Azzam al-Ahmad, responded by stating, “We can only talk about elections after Hamas allows the national consensus government to exercise its authority in the Gaza Strip, which the movement controls.”
The Palestine Liberation Organization or PLO was founded in 1964 with the goal of the liberation of Palestine via armed struggle. It is currently recognized by over 100 states to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and, as it is dominated by the Fatah faction, consolidates a variety of comparatively secular ideologies and acts as an umbrella organization incorporating many Palestinian movements dedicated to the struggle for Palestinian independence. The United Nations granted observer status to the PLO in 1974 and this continues today. In 1993 the PLO officially recognized Israel’s right to exist and rejected violence and terrorism as appropriate means of struggle. Due to this, Israel officially recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

The PLO is structured as a government in exile and is composed of a parliament (PNC) and an executing government (EC). In practice, the PLO behaves with a militaristic and hierarchic character indicative of its identity which is fundamentally a liberation organization aimed toward the establishment of the full statehood and independence of Palestine.

The representative status of the PLO has been questioned for many years by various groups both internally and externally. The lack of elections over the last 11 years has led many to believe that the PLO is wholly disinterested in elections as it is likely the organization would lose its grip on power in the Palestinian territories.
The Oslo Accords, in 1994, purposefully separated the Palestinian population living in the occupied Palestinian territories from the PLO via the creation of a Palestinian Authority, or PA, specifically for the territories. This move established a separate parliament and government and signified a decline in the PLO’s power. Eventually, the PA replaced the PLO as the prime Palestinian political institution. The PA was set up in accordance with the 1994 agreement as the interim administrative self-government body for the Gaza Strip as well as Areas A and B of the West Bank and came to be dominated by the Fatah political party. However, following the contentious elections in 2006 and the subsequent Gaza Conflict between Fatah and Hamas its authority now only extends to Areas A and B. Many human rights organizations have accused the PA of severely undermining human rights for the Palestinian population that it has jurisdiction over. The PA has coordinated security with Israel and, until recently, stated that whether there is a peace process or not, this coordination is essential for its survival as discontinuation would effectively dissolve the PA allowing Hamas to either take control of the Palestinian Authority or govern Palestinians without any such authority. However, on May 4, 2016 the Executive Committee announced that the PA would, “...immediately begin implementing the Palestinian Central Council’s decisions regarding limiting the political, economic and security relations with the occupation authorities,” due to, “Israel’s disregard of signed agreements and its insistence on destroying the two-state solution.” This security coordination is still in continuance as the decision has not been implemented.
Palestine is a transnational association between the PLO and the PA. The PA is charged with the responsibility for local functions of governance while the PLO is responsible for the representation of the Palestinian people in an international context. However, the PLO is prohibited from reaching international agreements that affect the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Therefore the Palestinian Authority is not the government of the State of Palestine but is the self-government of the inhabitants of the Palestinian territories. On the other hand, the PLO is considered by the UN to be the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and as the government of the State of Palestine. This situation is generally accepted by the Palestinian population insofar as it is perceived to be a temporary arrangement.

Mahmoud Abbas became Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on November 11, 2004 and assumed the roles of both President of the Palestinian National Authority (PA) and President of the State of Palestine in early 2005. On January 9, 2009 Abbas’s term was supposed to end but he extended his term until the next election in 2010 citing the PLO constitution. In December, 2009 he was voted to hold the office indefinitely by the PLO Central Council (PCC). In response to this Hamas, the Fatah party’s political rival, declared that it would not recognize Abbas as President and instead consider Aziz Dweik, who once served as speaker of the house for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), to be acting President until new elections can be held. After Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 Abbas issued a decree effectively suspending the PLC, dissolving the governmental ties between the PA and Hamas, and appointed Salam Fayyad as Prime Minister. With a defunct parliament and Executive Council, Abbas has burgeoned his support within the PLO and now has exclusive powers in both Fatah and the PA as a whole.

The Palestine National Council, or PNC, is the supreme legislative body of the PLO and sets in motion PLO policies and resolutions. It is important to note that although the PNC has a number of PLC members it is not an institution affiliated with the PA but is instead the equivalent of the PA’s PLC. Members of the PNC represent the Palestinian population living both in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as well as members of the Palestinian diaspora.
The Palestinian Legislative Council was created via the Oslo Accords that also established the PA. When it was functioning, the PLC was elected by the general Palestinian population and was therefore the legislative organ of the PA. The PLC is important to note as it has acted in an important role in the development of the current political situation but, like the PNC, is defunct and no longer operates. When Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in 2007 and the PA effectively split into two regional authorities, Chairman of the PLO, Fatah, and disputed President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas suspended the PLC, dismissed the Hamas majority government, and selected Salam Fayyad as Prime Minister who has since been succeeded by Rami Hamdallah. The PLC has the possibility of once again becoming the common parliament again if reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas is successful and the process of rapprochement begins. However, this seems highly unlikely to happen anytime in the near future.

The Palestinian Central Council has traditionally been elected by the PNC after nomination by the PLO Executive Council and is chaired by the PNC president. The PCC is therefore separated from the Palestinian population as the people do not have the right to decide who sits on the council. In January 2013, the the PLO announced that it had assigned the duties of the parliament (PNC) and the government of the PA to the Central Council.

The Executive Committee of the PLO, or EC, is the highest executive body present in the PLO and officially represents the organization internationally. It deals with the PLO’s financial issues, executes decisions set out by the PLO, and claims to represent the Palestinian people in general. The EC is headed by Mahmoud Abbas and consists of 18 people, none of which are affiliated with extremist Palestinian factions such as Hamas or Islamic Jihad. Because of this Hamas has called the PLO as a whole illegitimate as they and other Palestinian groups are not represented within the organization whatsoever.

The Palestinian judicial system, due to the multitudes of ruling powers over the last century, consists of Ottoman, British, Jordanian, and Egyptian laws still in operation. There are 37 courts in the WBGS (West Bank and Gaza Strip) composed of 20 Magistrate’s Courts, 11 courts of first instance, and 3 courts of appeal located in Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Gaza. There are also 2 higher courts which are the High Court of Justice and the Court of Appeals and Cassation. Palestine, in 2006, created the
Constitutional Court which is meant to control the constitutionality of laws, regulations, and the interpretation of the Basic Law provisions and other laws in the event of a conflict on the rights, duties, and functions of the three governmental authorities; these being the legislative, executive, and judicial authorities. Under the Civil and Commercial Procedures Law courts hear civil proceedings pertaining to both Palestinians and foreigners. This law extends the flexibility of the judiciary to act on a large number of issues that are considered especially pressing.

The Palestinian Constitution, adopted in 1964, is generally referred to as The Basic Law for the Palestinian National Authority, or the Palestinian National Covenant. The original document described the state of Israel as entirely illegal and considers Palestine, by the original orders of its Mandate borders, as the indivisible homeland of the Arab-Palestinian people. It also encouraged the elimination of Zionism in Palestine and worldwide and urged the liberation of Palestine via ethnic cleansing of Jewish presence. In 1993 Israeli Prime Minister Yatzhak Rabin called for changes to the Charter as part of the Oslo Accords and Yasser Arafat submitted the request to the PNC. The decision was made via the “letters of mutual recognition” that, “those articles of the Palestinian Covenant which deny Israel's right to exist, and the provisions of the Covenant which are inconsistent with the commitments of this letter are now inoperative and no longer valid.” However, there is some confusion as to whether official changes to the document were actually adopted. The Israeli organization Peace Watch, which claims to monitor bilateral compliance with the Israeli-PLO accords, issued a statement that said, "The decision fails to meet the obligations laid out in the Oslo accords in two respects. First, the actual amendment of the Covenant has been left for a future date. As of now, the old Covenant, in its original form, remains the governing document of the PLO, and will continue in this status until the amendments are actually approved... There is a sharp difference between calling for something to change and actually implementing the changes. Second, the decision does not specify which clauses will be amended.” In 2009, Fatah officials confirmed that the Charter would remain unchanged.
The Palestinian Security Services are made up of several armed forces and intelligence agencies. The most notable of these are the Security Forces and the police. Mahmoud Abbas, as President of the Palestinian National Authority, is currently Commander-in-Chief of these forces. Beginning after the Oslo Accords, and then later merged with the Palestinian National Security Forces, the PSS have partnered with Israel in security cooperation. The State of Palestine does not possess a land army, air force, or navy and does not maintain control of heavy weapon systems. The organizational functions claimed by the PSS are limited to maintaining public security and morals, protecting society, defending the country, and serving the people. In early 2016, several human rights organizations, including the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor (EMHRM) and the London-based Arab Organization for Human Rights have reported that the vast majority of human rights abuses made by the PA have been against those who oppose PA policies and those associated with Hamas. In 2015, according to the report by the EMHRM, 67 teachers/professors, 476 university students, and 35 journalists and human rights activists faced such oppression. The report also cites medical reports that confirm the use of systematic torture in PA jails in the West Bank and that the number of human rights violations committed by the PA are markedly higher that similar violations by Hamas in Gaza. In both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip people can be arrested for liking messages on Facebook, and other social media platforms, critical of the PA and Hamas.
The most important contributing factor to the current situation in Palestine is the decades old Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As of June 2016 the key issues of contention are: Israeli settlements, control of Jerusalem, borders, Palestinian freedom of movement, Palestinian right of return, and mutual recognition of one another’s state. Although there have been several attempts over the years to broker a two-state solution the deep disagreements over basic issues and mutual distrust between the two national groups produce significant skepticism that either side will follow through with obligations in relation to any eventual agreement. The conflict gives rise to a wide variety of opinions in relation to justifications for actions within each society and also highlights the deep divisions that exist internally within both Israel and Palestine. Fighting in this conflict has been performed by individuals, paramilitary groups, terror cells, and regular armies and casualties have not been limited to the military but have also included heavy casualties for civilians on both sides for virtually the entire duration of the conflict. There are a number of actors influencing the conflict, the most prominent being the state of Israel, headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and the PLO, led by Mahmoud Abbas. Also, there are a number of important international actors involved including the Arab League, especially Egypt, and the Quartet on the Middle East made up of the United States, the European Union, the United Nations, and Russia.
The independent monitoring organization Human Rights Watch contends that Israel imposes harsh and discriminatory restrictions on Palestinian’s human rights, builds and supports unlawful settlements in the occupied West Bank, and uses its security forces to push the population into submission. These security forces use excessive force against Palestinian activists and demonstrators while utilizing extra-judicial killings with near impunity. The closure of Gaza, implemented by Israel and supported by Egypt, is equivalent to collective punishment and has impeded reconstruction efforts, access to basic resources for innocent civilians, and is severely detrimental to basic human rights.

While there are a great many differing opinions present within Israeli society with respect to the conflict there are some prominent views, justifications, and condemnations in relation to Israeli policies that are important to note. Israelis in support of the occupation policies say that Israel has demonstrated pragmatic understanding and flexibility by being the initiator of the peace process and that it has agreed numerous times to painful concessions. Recognition of statehood has also been a point of contention, in that, the factions within Palestine that have refused to recognize Israel’s right to exist, namely Hamas and others such as Islamic Jihad, have given Israel a near inarguable defense that if their repressive behavior and policies are lifted then Israel will face a violent and existential threat to itself. In short, a large number of supporters of Israel feel that the very existence of the nation is at risk as they believe that the actual long-term goal of any Palestinian entity or state would be the complete destruction of the Jewish homeland and Israel as a whole.
When it comes to the Israeli settlements in the West Bank the local population within Israel is sharply divided. There is a general international consensus that Israeli settlements beyond the Green Line are illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention. However, on the Israeli political right, usually via members of the Likud party, the narrative is that the Convention does not apply to the territories in question as they have no “High Contracting Party.” This argument is basically the claim that, as Israel does not recognize Palestine’s right to exist as a state, international laws making the Israeli settlements illegal do not apply. On the left, there is the strong perception that all of these settlements are illegal and undermine efforts for peace but that the building of these settlements does not constitute an act of war and therefore does not justify violent actions as a solution to this issue. Palestinians as well as many outside Israel reject this notion and the leadership inside Israel continues to construct such settlements although the activity is thoroughly condemned by the international community except by Israel and the United States which mostly ignores the violation.

In Palestine, as in Israel, the opinions and views on the causes and appropriate actions in pursuit of a solution to the conflict vary wildly from person to person and from group to group. Most Palestinians believe that international law is very much on their side and see the violations made by the Israeli Government as obviously illegal, especially with respect to the West Bank settlements, and say that territorial claims beyond the 1967 borders are illegitimate. Palestinian and Arab leaders who advocate violent methods of struggle justify their positions using the argument that, as all Israelis are illegal occupants and that Israel utilizes a policy of universal conscription, that all Israelis are therefore potential enemy combatants. They contend that these occupiers are the cause of tens of thousands of casualties and the suffering of the millions of refugees who cannot return to their homes. Some feel that the international community tends to be unwilling to assist them in the pursuit of their human rights unless Palestinians reject peaceful methods of discourse with Israel and those who support their policies in Palestine. In this opinion, only when Palestinians are causing serious problems will the powerful international actors, especially with respect to the Quartet, intervene and work to help Palestine.
Much of the justification that the Israeli Government uses to defend their current occupation and settlement of Palestinian territory is centered on the argument that, since Palestine is not technically a state in their perspective, Israel is still in compliance with international law. Although, at this time, more than 130 countries maintain some form of recognition of Palestine as a state there is significant refusal by much of the western world to do so, particularly amongst governments that provide economic and military support to Israel. However, France has recently begun to spearhead new resolution efforts and has laid the groundwork for the recognition of Palestine which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu referred to as, “A grave mistake.” It seems likely that Palestine will continue to garner support for this cause as time goes on, but it is still unclear to what extent Israel’s behavior will change as nations move to do so. Arguments against the recognition of statehood are also quite various. The narrative present in countries such as the US, the UK, and Israel, in both the media and in statements made by political leaders, is generally that there is no real two-state solution but that such an idea is merely an advancement toward Israel’s ruin. These claims articulate that if Israel cedes too much control in Palestinian territories that the inevitable result is a rapid expansion of Hamas resulting in a brutal and bloody war of annihilation against Israel together with their “jihadist brethren” in surrounding countries. In March 2016, Israel appropriated and additional 579 acres (234 hectares) of land in the occupied West Bank demonstrating its resolve that Palestine never reach a point in which they can pose a serious threat to Israel.

The security situation in contentious areas within Israel/Palestine is extremely dangerous and poses a very real threat to civilians in both territories. In April 2016, the independent monitoring group Security Council Report reported that the security situation in Israel/Palestine has continued to worsen over the past 10 months. Between September 2015 and April 2016 there were stabbings, car-rammings, and shooting attacks by Palestinians resulting in the deaths of 28 Israelis and two US tourists while Israeli security forces killed 128 people including 135 who were reported as attackers by the Israeli Government. There are also the multitudes of tunnels that reach underneath the Gazan border and Egypt has reported that they have discovered some tunnels large enough for trucks to pass through beneath the Sinai-Gaza border. Both Israel and Egypt claim that these tunnels are being used to smuggle weapons for use by extremist groups as well as for ISIS members in the
Sinai Peninsula to travel into and out of Gaza communicating intelligence and for medical treatment. Currently, the Palestinian Security Services and the Israeli security forces coordinate on security matters and enforcement within the West Bank, however, both have been accused by various human rights organizations of brutal suppression of the rights of the Palestinian population.

While women have full suffrage in the PA and, in 2006, made up 47% of registered voters in the elections there are still major problems with the enforcement of their basic human rights, especially in the context of violence within families. During the last district elections only 15 of the 414 candidates were women and, even when election laws introduced a quota system for women in national party lists, only 22% of candidates were women. The Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group reports that the discriminatory laws that excuse and bolster violence against women and the vacancy of institutionalized policies to prevent violence, assist victims, and hold perpetrators accountable present in Palestine greatly contribute to this problem and also routinely return women into environments with their attackers almost always without anything being done. The Human Rights Watch, in 2006, released a report called, “A Question of Security: Violence against Palestinian Women and Girls” that claims that a significant number of women and girls within the OPT are habitually subjected to spousal and child abuse, rape, incest, and honor crimes. These honor crimes sometimes include honor killings and it is reported that the Hamas Government has set up infrastruc-
tures that encourage them. Hamas has enforced some of the Islamic standards of dress within Gaza wherein women must wear headscarves in order to gain entrance into government ministry buildings and Hamas claims this was done to reduce the amount of divorces in the Gaza Strip. Overall, the status of women’s rights within Palestine leaves much to be desired as true equality is seemingly not present at this time.

Food insecurity in Palestine is very high with one-third of households, or roughly 1.8 million people, classified as food insecure. The West Bank is in a far better situation, with 19% of the population suffering from food insecurity, than the Gaza Strip where the number is closer to 57%. Food insecurity within Palestine is primarily caused by high rates of poverty due to unemployment, which is largely due to the Israeli imposed movement and access restrictions, and high food prices resulting from economic shocks. Today, the majority of households in Palestine spend more than half of their income on food. Due to these high prices the nutritional value and variety of food available to Palestinians is low which gives rise to high rates of undernutrition.

The allocation of water resources serves as a clear signifier of Israel’s dominance over the region. The majority of the Israeli and Palestinian water supply is derived from three large underground aquifers, two of which cross under the green line. The Israeli government controls access to these aquifers and supplies water the West Bank according to its own prerogative. Currently, about 77% of the Palestinian water supply comes to the population in this fashion. In fact, disputes about water usage and allocation were one of the major incentives for the escalation that led to the Six-Day War in 1967. Today, arguments rage about the rights to the use of the mountain aquifer of which Israel and Israeli settlements utilize roughly 80% of the available water, while Palestine uses about 20%. Palestinians claim that they are prevented from gaining access to their own water resources by an oppressive military power which forces them to purchase water from their occupiers and hugely inflated prices. In addition to this, Israel allocates to its citizens and settlements in the West Bank between 3 and 5 times as much water as it does to Palestinians. This behavior, according to Palestinians, cripples their economy and dramatically hinders the ability of Palestine to grow and prosper economically. Hydrologists studying the problem say that the demand for water already outpaces supply as demand is steadily rising and the supply is unsustainable.
While the Palestinian Authority has officially guaranteed freedom of assembly the right for protesters to demonstrate or to voice criticism of the PA regime or PA policy has become increasingly suppressed by the police and such restriction has become a major obstacle in the pursuit of Palestinian human rights. In May 2016, the Palestinian Independent Commission on Human Rights published a report that stated there were 9 attacks on peaceful assemblies with 5 in the West Bank and 4 in the Gaza Strip. In the same month, the ICHR received 37 complaints of torture and ill-treatment by the police and 60 complaints of invalid detention and political detention. The citizens of both the West Bank and Gaza are subjected to a systematic campaign of human rights violations as is asserted by a report by the Arab Organization for Human Rights that states that the PA tortures about 96% of its detainees.
ACTIVISM AND CIVIL SOCIETY

A. INTIFADAS

FIRST INTIFADA:

Lasting from December 1987 to September 1993, the First Intifada began in the Jabalia refugee camp after an Israeli Defense Force (IDF) truck collided with a civilian vehicle, killing 4 Palestinians. In the aftermath of the incident a protest movement developed which consisted of general boycotts of Israeli Civil Administration institutions and of Israeli settlements wherein Palestinians refused to work on Israeli products. The protests also included other general strikes and extensive civil disobedience. As the conflict moved forward Palestinians began throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at the IDF. In the first 13 months, Israel killed 332 Palestinians and, due to the high proportion of youths, civilians, and children killed, adopted a policy of purposefully breaking Palestinian’s bones rather than killing them. During the six years of the conflict the IDF killed roughly 1,200 Palestinians. According to Save the Children, the IDF, during the first 2 years of the intifada, beat more than 25,000 Palestinian children whom had to seek medical treatment for their injuries. Intra-Palestinian violence was also widespread with an estimated 882 Palestinians killed as accused Israeli collaborators.
In 2000, Prime Minister of Israel Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount in an act that was seen by Palestinians as highly offensive and provocative. Tensions erupted into armed conflict and both sides inflicted high rates of casualties on both civilians and combatants. The Palestinians utilized suicide bombings and gunfire, while the Israelis used gunfire, tanks, and air attacks. The conflict lasted until February 2005, when Mahmoud Abbas and Ariel Sharon met in the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit and agreed that both sides would cease their violent attacks everywhere. However, the violence did not completely stop in the years following the agreement although suicide bombings decreased dramatically.

There is, arguably, a third intifada taking place as of this writing. Also called the “Silent Intifada” or “Intifada 3.0,” the forms of the escalation of conflict, both violent and nonviolent, are different this time around and it is unclear how well different parts of the movement are coordinated or even related. Violence in relation to the status of the Temple Mount escalated sharply in October 2015 with killings by Hamas. The rise of “Lone Wolf” attacks in this conflict has been attributed to viral social-media campaigns that encourage stabbing attacks and car-rammings against Israelis. It is worthy to note that violence is not the only factor present in these movements as there is relatively popular use of peaceful protest as well as the world-wide Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign which seeks to encourage international actors to put pressure on Israel to reform its policies on the suppression of the Palestinian peoples.
Protesting, both violent and nonviolent, has a long history in Palestine stretching back for the entirety of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Protests have been aimed against both the general Israeli occupation and IDF forces as well as against the PA, which is seen by many Palestinians as an extension of Israeli authority. Popular methods of protest include the blocking of roads, hunger strikes by detainees, and stone-throwing. All methods of protest are usually met with violence or at least with tear gas being fired into protesters. Unfortunately, the nonviolent strategies being implemented on the ground by Palestinians are usually drowned out by news of violent clashes between IDF forces and protesters.
Although the economic situation within the West Bank and Gaza Strip differ to some notable degree, the overall summary is that Palestine has suffered a prolonged economic depression for quite some time. A 2007 World Bank report states that the main cause for such economic hardship is the Israeli occupation. All major roads are essentially off-limits to Palestinians thus making it impossible to do normal business with no prospect of expansion. Israeli Palestinians, that is Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, also face discriminatory economic policies and laws that limit free and fair access to land, rights to political participation, criminal procedures, and state budget resources.

Quartet: The Quartet on the Middle East is composed of the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, and Russia. Created following the Second Intifada the Quartet is involved in mediating the peace process within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Primary concerns of the Quartet include Palestinian political violence, status of Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements, status of Jerusalem, general security concerns, the Jewish State, and final border reconciliation. Criticisms of the quartet include the belief that the Quartet maintains an ineffective presence in the region as no notable changes in Israeli or Palestinian Authority policy have taken place as a result of a meeting by the Quartet. In June 2016, the French government began to lay the groundwork for recognition of the State of Palestine and the formation of a new diplomatic plan. One of the components to this plan could be the expansion of the Quartet to include some moderate Arab States, some European countries, and France.
**Arab-League:** The Arab-League is currently made up of 22 member states including some major Arab World powers such as Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The League, in 1964, established both the initial Palestinian entity and the PLO. In 1988 the PLO’s seat in the Arab League was assumed by the State of Palestine after the declaration of independence. The League has been an important actor since the inception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 1948 and has acted as the foremost advocate for Palestinian statehood on a multitude of occasions. It has repeatedly called for a peace plan based on the UN borders established before the Six-Day War in 1967 and has offered full normalization of relations with Israel if the government withdraws its forces from occupied territories and recognizes an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. Today, although the Arab League maintains its position, a two-state solution looks unlikely to manifest in the foreseeable future.

**Iran:** Traditionally, especially in the early 1990s, Iran provided a substantial amount of Hamas’s funding. However, in February 2016, although Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Hossein Jaberi Ansari stated that supporting, “Palestinian resistance movements is part of Iran’s foreign policy...” Iran has ceased funding Hamas. Relations between Hamas and Iran have been unstable since the breakout of civil war in Syria during which Hamas denounced Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Iran has officially suspended the arms and money it has normally dedicated to Hamas and while Hamas develops a relationship with Saudi Arabia it seems unlikely, or unusual, that Iran would use some of its newfound post-sanction money to support Hamas.
II PILLARS OF SUPPORT
FOR INSTITUTIONS SUBVERTING PALESTINIAN HUMAN RIGHTS

VARIOUS ACTORS

It is essential, to understand the current situation on the ground in Palestine, to note that the interests and agents exercising power within the country vary from heavily involved international communities to marginalized and subjugated local communities. Palestinians wishing to secure their human rights, establish peace in the territories, end the Israeli occupation, and consolidate their governing structure are not just going up against one opponent, but many. All parties involved seize the opportunity to extend their reach, exert their power, or protect their interests usually in total disregard of the Palestinian populace. A successful political movement to secure public freedoms within Palestine must have a very strong, well organized, and focused vision of local as well as international active participation. The most powerful actors influencing the status of the Palestinian people are: Israel and its supporting governments, the Palestinian Authority, Hamas, and the wide range of ideologies produced by decades of militarized occupation.
Israel enjoys the support of a vast array of national governments many of whom provide ample financial and military support. As of this writing Israel has official diplomatic ties with 157 of the other 192 member states of the United Nations as well as with the European Union and the Holy See (Vatican City). The main political, financial, and military supporter of Israel is the United States and the U.S. Congress places considerable importance on a close and supportive relationship with Israel. Israel benefits from this relationship in several ways. For example, in 2014, the US provided 4 billion dollars in foreign military aid to Israel and also about 8 billion dollars in loan guarantees. The US also provides strong political support for Israel and has used its UN Security Council veto power 42 times on resolutions relating to Israel out of a total of 83 times this power has been used altogether. The US also gains from this relationship and has benefitted from supporting Israel in several ways especially since the end of the Cold War when Israel essentially became the linchpin of US Middle East policy. This policy is aimed toward the stabilization of Middle Eastern oil markets and has traditionally supported the Egyptian, Saudi Arabian, and Israeli governments to accomplish this. With such strong international support and aid Israel is able to maintain its dominance over and occupation of the Palestinian territories with near total impunity.
The central issue pertaining to the development of Palestinian human rights is the Israeli occupation. This decades long militarized subjugation of the Palestinian population has given rise to a situation wherein more than one full generation have had every aspect of Palestinian society molded against the backdrop of this issue. Due to this “divide and rule” strategy imposed by the Israeli government the behaviors of Palestinian institutions, social infrastructure, education, political narrative, public media, and political movements have been propped up against the occupying government, and often enough, the people of Israel. Indeed, as there are no Palestinians who can remember a “State of Palestine” absent an occupier in some form, Palestinian culture reflects an environment and a feeling of an entrenched and generally intractable conflict.

As the major political and ideological supporters of the Palestinian Authority, Fatah, and other political factions that express a general loyalty to the PA, have a strong influence on the Palestinian narrative and conversation on the ground within the occupied territories. While claiming to be relatively secular the language coming from the group is inherently anti-Semitic and as of July 2016 the rhetoric coming from the Fatah led government is again becoming increasingly inflammatory. While it has almost always used phrases like “the blood of martyrs is holy” recently it has begun to depict Jews in general as agents of Satan and some experts claim that Fatah supports the social media movements that have given rise to “lone wolf” stabbing attacks, car-rammings, and other violent actions against Israelis.

In 2014, the U.S. government provided over 400 million dollars to the Palestinian Authority by itself. The combined total for other governments including the EU, the UK, Sweden, Germany, Norway, Japan, Switzerland, Australia, Netherlands, Denmark, France, Belgium, Finland, and Ireland, in 2014, was over 1 billion dollars. Together with over 70 other countries, the Palestinian Authority usually receives between 6 and 8 billion dollars annually. While major portions of these funds indeed go toward their intended purpose, the development of political, economic, and social infrastructure, there are also huge portions that go to the families of “martyrs” and detainees in Israeli prisons who have carried out violent attacks on Israelis, both civilian and military. Also in 2014, Israel’s Deputy Foreign Minister stated that the PA’s budget going to terrorist’s families surpassed 75 million dollars per year. These stipends serve as a powerful motivator for struggling families and individuals to commit violent acts as a way to support their families.
The PSS and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) coordinate closely with one another on matters of security within Palestine. However, this relationship is seen by many as a means to protect Israelis and Israeli security interests more than as a joint security force as the structure of the cooperation heavily prioritizes focus on maintaining a secure environment for Israel at the cost of Palestinian’s human rights and dignity. Many civil society leaders claim that the Oslo Accords actually turned the PA into a security sub-contractor for the IDF and that the PSS are meant to enforce Israeli occupation policies on Israel’s behalf. President Abbas has repeatedly threatened to end the cooperation to show a steadfast initiative to end the Israeli occupation but has never taken concrete steps toward doing so.

While still officially a part of the Palestinian Authority, Hamas represents the disunity that exists within not only the governmental structures of Palestine but also the Palestinian population as a whole. While Fatah is somewhat clandestine in its support of violent extremists, and generally cooperates on security matters with Israel, Hamas is clear and outspoken about its anti-Semitic ideology and its goal of a Palestine completely purged of all Israeli presence and influence. At one time or another, in addition to receiving funding from anti-Israeli governments like Iran and now Saudi Arabia, Hamas has raised money for years via various charity organizations wherein it is virtually impossible to differentiate which entities are performing the social responsibilities promised by the charities and which are funding rocket attacks against Israel and other extreme violent acts. The fact that Hamas exerts governmental control in the Gaza Strip demonstrates how far the Palestinian cause is from achieving their common goal, the end of Israeli occupation, or even from achieving a level of cooperation with the Palestinian Authority that could give rise to a measure of political unity. Hamas is also a major detriment to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process as Israel considers the faction to be an extreme Islamist organization bent on the destruction of Israeli culture and Israel uses their example to tout their own security objectives and to justify the occupation as “self-defense.” By giving credence to the Israeli arguments for defense and by continuing the Fatah-Hamas conflict, the presence of Hamas is a powerful impairment of Palestinian unity.
A new Palestinian generation is emerging that utilizes new objectives, tools, and visions for the future of Palestine. A portion of this generation is revolting against oppressive forces while another part, far less visible than the revolting young people, is busy strategizing for effective struggle and is mobilizing these strategies both internationally and locally. This generation is far more transnational than any before and is in the process of forming its own ideological, intellectual, and political leadership. If any generation of Palestinians can address and work to solve the base causes of Palestinian suffering, fragmentation, and powerlessness this is the one. The young people of Palestine are completely fed-up with both the Israeli occupation and the ineffective Palestinian Authority leadership and are seeking alternative methods to secure their basic human rights. Instead of attempting to revive the PLO to its former “glory” these Palestinian youth leaders are consolidating objectives with a stronger and more unified Palestinian leadership inside Israel. Also, successful movements such as the BDS campaign and the international solidarity movement that work in conjunction with Palestinian civil society provide hope that, as these leaders of the next generation emerge, they will use the newfound legal tools and a rights-based approach to pursue justice for Palestine.
Currently, both the PA and Hamas are in danger of col-
lapse due to increased fragmentation and unwillingness
within opposing factions to come to the table. This gives
rise to fears that violence will escalate and perhaps
erupt into factional conflict if one or both of these insti-
tutions fail and, as Israel again renews a policy of rapid
settlement expansion, the pressure is gaining so vio-
ience is beginning anew. Within the PA, Mahmoud Ab-
bas lacks a clear successor as his health fails and even
moderates within Fatah are unable to provide a clear
vision of the future to the Palestinian people. Hamas has
suffered dramatic economic hardship as well as a loss of
support from Egypt when the Muslim Brotherhood lost
power in 2013 serving to further isolate Hamas on all
sides. 2016 and 2017 could very well see the collapse
of the PA, possibly violent intra-Fatah disputes, further
fragmentation, entrenchment of the Fatah-Hamas divide,
and continued or even strengthened Israeli occupation.
All of these developments spell misery for the Palestin-
ian people. Perhaps the gravest possibility is if the PA
collapses, or even Hamas, the emergence of a security
vacuum gives rise to dangerous levels of uncertainty. In
fact, ISIS and factions loyal to the group have expressed
a keen interest in establishing a presence in the territo-
ries and have reportedly already created cells within the
Gaza Strip.

Israel has no obvious intention to end their occupa-
tion of the Palestinian territories in the near future. The
expansion of settlements in recent months has given
the impression that Israel will continue to take more
and more land for itself as it feels completely justified
in doing so despite international condemnation. Hamas
is once again preparing for violent confrontation with
Israel and is increasing its presence and influence within
the West Bank. Also, it is likely that another, even more
extreme, political ideology will gain prominence on the
scene within Gaza in the form of Palestinian Islamic Ji-
had (PIJ) which, since the Israeli and Egyptian squeeze
on Hamas beginning in 2014, has seen a continuous
growth of influence in the area with help and funding
from Iran and Syria. While it seems somewhat unlikely
that the PA will completely fail due to support from the
US and the fact that it stands as Israel’s preferred nego-
tiating partner the possibility is still real and should be
taken seriously by both the international community as
well as local citizens. The “Third Intifada” will continue in
both nonviolent and violent forms but is expected to be-
come increasingly more violent as the year goes on. In
response to attacks, the Israeli government will bolster
their military presence in occupied Palestine and further subjugate the population via the expansion of collective punishment measures such as home destruction. On a good note, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign will probably resist Israeli attempts to brand the movement as terrorist activity as BDS continues to apply pressure from the international community on the Israeli government. The role of nonviolent youth movements will dramatically increase in importance and function as the groups involved, various and fragmented as they are now, seek to coordinate their functions and spread a more unified message. Overall, the nature of the Israeli occupation will not change but there are opportunities to shift the narrative and coerce a new and more effective intifada to use nonviolent methods of struggle successfully.
IV OPPORTUNITIES FOR NONVIOLENT ACTION SUCCESS

Palestinian nonviolent resistance has been present since the early years of the 20th century and although usually omitted from the historical narrative, makes up a rich history and legacy of nonviolent attempts to overcome the imbalance of power. It is essential to recognize that Israel is not the only actor that needs to be pressured to change their goals and behavior. In fact, resistance factions seem to be crying out for two revolutions; one against Israel and another against the PA. Hamas, the behavior exhibited by the PA, and the Israeli occupation demonstrate that Palestinians have violent opposition from all sides including from internal actors. A successful movement would need to be directly aimed at the political systems as a whole rather than one single “enemy”. A strong narrative and a clear vision of government reformation, goals with respect to relations with Israel, and the removal of support for Hamas and other extremist organizations are key. Palestinians must find a way to lessen the fractious and varying differences of opinion with respect to populations in the West Bank, Gaza, and Palestinians living in Israel if any such effort is to succeed. A comprehensive strategy based on a nonviolent conception of direct action is plausible. Even though Palestinian acts of nonviolence do not attract the attention of the headlines and the mainstream media portrays any and all forms of Palestinian resistance as extremism it is important to understand that there are still legitimate forces utilizing nonviolence in Palestine today.

NOTABLE ACTORS:

BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, AND SANCTIONS CAMPAIGN (BDS)

The BDS campaign is an international attempt to put political and economic pressure on Israel with the goal of providing an incentive for Israel to discontinue its practices with respect to its occupation of Palestinian territories. The stated goals of the campaign are the end of the occupation and dismantling of the wall, recognition of fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the recognition of the Palestinian’s right to return to their properties. Methods used by the campaign include an avid social media platform, petitions, articles, and protests wherein pressure is placed on individuals to eliminate their participation, economic or otherwise, with events or products that are produced by the Israeli economy with special emphasis on those related to the Israeli settlements. BDS has been called the best and last hope for measurable nonviolent success in attaining Palestinian human rights. Also, there is growing consensus between observers and analysts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that BDS is indeed working and is coming nearer to accomplishing its goals.
International Solidarity Movement (ISM)

ISM is a Palestinian-led movement directed toward forwarding the Palestinian cause within the greater Israeli-Palestinian conflict and advocates the use of nonviolent methods of protest and activism only. The movement has used tactics such as deterring military operations with an obstructive approach, removing roadblocks, blocking military vehicles, violating Israeli curfew orders, hindering construction of the West Bank barrier, entering closed military zones, and attempts to break the Israeli imposed blockade of Gaza via various methods. ISM itself as well as one of its cofounders were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 and 2006 respectfully. The Israeli Foreign Ministry has claimed that ISM members, despite the group’s condemnation of violence, take an active role in illegal and violent actions against IDF soldiers. An Israeli court has ruled that the ISM abuses morals and human rights to blur and complicate the severity of its actions which originally manifested as violence. Also, it claims that ISM members provide moral, financial, and logistic aid to terrorist organizations.

Weekly Protests in Bil‘in

Located roughly 12km west of Ramallah in the center of the West Bank lies Bil’in a village of about 1,800 mostly Muslim residents. The village has garnered international attention, since 2005, for its weekly generally nonviolent protests against the construction of the wall. Community leader and organizer of the protests Abdullah Abu Rahmah is currently under indictment for the “ideological crime” of heading illegal actions in the West Bank. The protests take the form of a march from the village to the wall with the goal of halting construction or dismantling finished portions and the IDF always intervene to prevent the march from reaching the wall. Unfortunately violence almost always ensues mostly on the part of the IDF and, in the past, both soldiers and protesters have been seriously injured.

ALWATAN Center

Based in Hebron, Palestine the ALWATAN Center hosts workshops called, “Civil Resistance and Nonviolent Action for Peace & Social Change,” and states that it is committed to the development and implementation of innovative strategies for community reconciliation and transformation in the society and for the pursuit of Palestinian basic rights. A value they list as central to their approach to nonviolent education is the recognition that the Palestinian people are living with the repercussions of over 62 years of occupation and displacement from their homeland.
Taghyeer, literally meaning change, is an organization established in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Economy in March 2014. This movement is focused on becoming the forefront of the social media campaign in the pursuit of Palestinian rights. Using modern technology and social media platforms the movement aims to channel the energy and skills of the younger generation toward awareness, proactivity, and nonviolent methods of struggle. The stated goals for 2016 are the engagement of more than 75 community leaders within Palestine to establish local priorities and develop ideas for purposeful nonviolent social action, hold a series of regional leadership workshops to build expertise in nonviolent struggle throughout Palestine, and hopefully to roll out a web based electronic tool called “Mapping Her” which will map the marginalized, harassed, unprivileged, invisible and hurt women as well as map Palestinian’s pain for people to find, explore, and discover how to make tangible change within the society.

CFP is a group of both Palestinians and Israelis who have taken an active roll in the cycle of violence in the region: Israeli soldiers serving in the IDF and Palestinians as combatants fighting to free their country, Palestine, from the Israeli occupation. These former armed combatants, that once fought against each other, have come together and established Combatants for Peace on the basis of nonviolent principles. The organization primarily works at the street level in the two communities, encouraging people to take joint Israeli-Palestinian action against the on-going occupation and violence. The movement’s activities are implemented by a number of Israeli-Palestinian regional groups whose members work in the field and use various tools to provide collective opposition to Israeli military rule and to promote bi-national nonviolent interaction. They also hold in-house meetings and lectures as well has provide tours in both areas with the aim of exposing Israelis to as many different aspects of possible of the military government within the territories. While maintaining a strong media presence CFP also holds the joint annual Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day service in which the victims of the conflict on both sides are remembered while also placing the burden of the conflict upon the citizens in an attempt to avert the next victims.
The Holy Land Trust, founded in 1988 by Sami Awad, is a Palestinian NGO located in the heart of Bethlehem and adheres to a strict discipline of nonviolent action in an effort to strengthen and empower the peoples of the Holy Land to engage in spiritual, pragmatic and strategic paths that will end all forms of oppression. While not officially a religious organization the group aspires to learn from the teachings of all faiths to bring unity to the human family. HLT facilitates a variety of programs including the Palestine Summer Encounter wherein participants experience life within Palestine as it really is, the Bet Lahem Live Festival, Musicians Without Borders, and the Peace Research and Learning Center (PRLC). The PLRC is an international HUB for publications and learning on issues pertaining to nonviolence and conflict resolution.

ALLMEP is a network of organizations that conduct civil society work in conflict transformation, development, coexistence and cooperative activities. Working on the ground with Palestinians, Israelis, Arabs, and Jews the group also works on an international level to educate key audiences, including opinion makers, elected representatives, government officials, American and international funders, and the international community about the critical opportunities and needs of people-to-people efforts. ALLMEP is one of the best funded organizations working with both Israelis and Palestinians in a nonviolent manner and has earned the support of 112 United States senators and members of Congress while also securing more than $80 million in U.S. funding for people-to-people peace building efforts in Israel/Palestine.

Established in early 2013 the Peace Factory’s purpose is to be a voice of connection between various peoples of the Middle East giving them a face, and more importantly, a voice. PF is heavily focused on social media and the potential to bring understanding to conflicts in the region by sharing each narrative to its members. The most notable campaign to date is “Israel Loves Iran” in which, during 2012 as war between Iran and Israel seemed imminent, a graphic designer named Ronny Edry posted a photo of himself with his daughter on Facebook with the caption “Iranians, we will never bomb your country. We <3 you.” The photo went viral and gave birth to the “We Love You” movement.
ROOTS

Founded in 2014 by Ali Abu Awwad, Roots is a network of local Palestinians and Israelis who see each other as partners in the struggle against violent conflict. Focused on grassroots development, the organization hosts a local leaders program within local schools to promote leadership against violence. It also hosts a summer camp, after-school programs, a dual-narrative program, and language courses.

THE HOME

Founded in March 2015 The Home is an NGO composed of both Israelis and Palestinians who share the same land. The group maintains no political affiliation and recognizes the statehood of both Israel and Palestine. They are adamantly opposed to the status quo imposed by the Oslo Accords and present their initiative “The 8 Step Jerusalem Resolution” as an alternative to the “Oslo paradigm,” in that, the activities of the group encourage peace in a bottom-up manner rather than a top-down fashion. Activities and methods used by the group include mutual social activities with Israelis and Palestinians, organizing aid operations within Palestine, hosting Palestinian youth groups to meet with holocaust survivors in an attempt to encourage acknowledgement of each other’s pain, developing Palestinian agricultural land, and hosting “Cleaning the Hate” campaigns with Israeli and Palestinian participants in which groups work together to clean the dirty streets of Jerusalem. The Home has also given several lectures to Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans encouraging understanding on each other’s perspectives as well as participated in at least one Israeli-Palestinian peace conference in a narrative capacity.
METHODS USED BY NONVIOLENT RESISTORS:

HUNGER STRIKES
There have been many Palestinian prisoners within Israeli detention centers that have adopted the practice of refusing food to protest the ill treatment they receive by Israeli authorities. Today, more and more Palestinian political prisoners are forced to utilize the tactic as a means of last-resort as it is the only method that will draw international condemnation of the violence inflicted upon detainees. This method, since 1967, has counted notable successes in the release of prisoners and demonstrated that, even when faced with cruel and violent oppression, nonviolent struggle can be used to change the balance of power on a number of levels.

REMOVAL OF ROADBLOCKS
There are large unmanned mounds of concrete and earth blocking passage along roads all over the West Bank and some are even placed at the entrances of villages to isolate inhabitants by preventing traffic into and out of these areas. Palestinian activists have, for years, organized the removal of these barriers and, although usually replaced relatively quickly by the IDF, contribute to the narrative that Palestinians are being imprisoned by their occupier.

DETERRENCE OF MILITARY OPERATIONS
By putting their bodies on the line Palestinian activist are sometimes successful in hampering or even preventing the IDF from completing patrols and searches. The tactic is referred to as the “white-face defense” as activists have observed that the IDF is far more likely to shoot dark-skinned protesters than white western-looking activists given the major difference in international response and condemnation.
CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS WITHIN ISRAEL

There are several groups within Israel today that developed out of the Israeli refuser movement beginning in earnest in 2001. Both Israeli citizens and Palestinian citizens of Israel participate in the movement by resisting conscription or refusing to support Israeli policies with regard to the occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of the Gaza Strip.

INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE ON ISRAEL BY NGOS

Various Palestinian, Israeli, and International NGOs such as Bustan, B’Tselem, Holy Land Trust, the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, Sabeel, the International Solidarity Movement, Rabbis for Human Rights, and many others are directly and indirectly challenging Israel’s apartheid policies utilizing various forms of non-violent action. Recently many of these movements have counted legal successes with respect to their rights to promote their agendas such as the boycotting of Israeli products produced in settlements. These movements have breathed life into the third intifada by sharing a generally clear narrative with corresponding groups on the ground within Palestine.
As of this writing Palestinians are anxious about the possibility of renewed armed struggle as there is adequate support for violent action within both the West bank and the Gaza Strip. They are extremely suspicious of a political process that fails to prevent Israel from honoring international agreements, denying the illegality of its actions, expanding settlements, and confiscating land with impunity. Although there is a stronger than ever international push for a peace settlement and for concessions by Israel, the slow-to-come success and general failure by these movements to produce a less contentious environment in an expedient manner will likely give rise to new and more capable anti-Israel grassroots movements. Palestinians must continue to gather support for governmental and ideological consolidation from both the international community and from local factions within Palestine if any future nonviolent movement is to thoroughly succeed.

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