



Al-Aqsa Mosque & Sheikh Jarrah: Israel-Palestine

Why in News

Recently, Israeli armed forces attacked **Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Haram esh-Sharif in Jerusalem**, ahead of a march by Zionist nationalists commemorating Israel's capture of the eastern half of the city in 1967.

- The threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of **Sheikh Jarrah** escalated the crisis further.
- **Zionism** is a worldwide Jewish movement that resulted in the establishment and development of the state of Israel and that now supports the state of Israel as a Jewish homeland.

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Key Points

▪ Al-Aqsa Mosque:

- It is one of the holiest structures in the Islamic faith. It sits inside a 35-acre site known by Muslims as Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary, and by Jews as the Temple Mount.
 - The site is part of the Old City of Jerusalem, **sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims.**
- It is believed to have been **completed early in the eighth century** and faces the Dome of the Rock, the golden-domed Islamic shrine that is a widely recognized symbol of Jerusalem.
- The [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO](#), has classified the **Old City of Jerusalem and its walls** as a [World Heritage Site](#).

▪ Conflict over Jerusalem:

- Jerusalem has been at the centre of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to the original 1947 [United Nations \(UN\)](#) partition plan, Jerusalem was proposed to be an international city.
- But in the **first Arab Israel war of 1948**, the **Israelis captured the western half of the city**, and **Jordan took the eastern part**, including the Old City that houses Haram al-Sharif.
- Israel captured East Jerusalem from Jordan in the [Six-Day War 1967](#) and annexed it later.
 - Since its annexation, **Israel has expanded settlements in East Jerusalem.**
- **Israel** sees the whole city as its **“unified, eternal capital”**, whereas the **Palestinian leadership** across the political spectrum have maintained that they would not accept any compromise formula for the future Palestinian state unless **East Jerusalem is its capital.**

▪ **Sheikh Jarrah Issue:**

- Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced out of their homes when the State of Israel was created in historical Palestine in 1948.
 - Twenty-eight of those **Palestinian families moved to Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem to settle there.**
- In 1956, when East Jerusalem was ruled by Jordan, the Jordanian Ministry of Construction and Development and the **UN Relief and Works Agency facilitated the construction of houses for these families in Sheikh Jarrah.** But Israel would capture East Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967.
 - By the early 1970s, **Jewish agencies started demanding the families leave the land.**
- Earlier this year (2021), **the Central Court in East Jerusalem upheld a decision to evict four Palestinian families** from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah in favor of Jewish settlers.
- The issue remains **unresolved and potentially inflammable.**

▪ **India’s Stand on Israel-Palestine Issue:**

- India **recognised Israel in 1950** but it is also **the first non-Arab country to recognise Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)** as the sole representative of the Palestinian.
 - India is also one of the first countries to **recognise the statehood of Palestine in 1988.**
- In 2014, India favored [UNHRC’s](#) resolution to probe Israel’s human rights violations in Gaza. Despite supporting the probe, **India abstained from voting against Israel in UNHRC in 2015.**
- As a part of Link West Policy, India has **de-hyphenated its relationship with Israel and Palestine in 2018** to treat both the countries mutually independent and exclusive.
- In June 2019, India **voted in favor of a decision introduced by Israel** in the [UN Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\)](#) that objected to granting consultative status to a Palestinian non-governmental organization.
- So far **India has tried to maintain the image of its historical moral supporter for Palestinian self-determination**, and at the same time to **engage in the military, economic, and other strategic relations with Israel.**

▪ **Related Developments:**

- In March 2021, [International Criminal Court \(ICC\)](#) launched investigations into the war crimes in [Palestinian territories occupied by Israel \(West Bank and the Gaza Strip\).](#)
- In April 2021, the [US restored at least USD 235 million in financial assistance to the Palestinians.](#)

Way Forward

- The **world at large needs to come together for a peaceful solution** but the reluctance of the

Israeli government and other involved parties have aggravated the issue more. Thus a **balanced approach would help to maintain favorable relations with Arab countries as well as Israel.**

- The recent **normalization agreements between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco**, known as the **Abraham Accords**, are the steps in the right direction. All **regional powers should envisage peace** between the two countries on line of Abraham Accords.

[Source:TH](#)

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