



The Big Picture: Israel-Palestine Conflict

Why in News

India, the United States and several other countries have called for calm and restraint amid escalating tensions and violence between [Israel and Palestinian](#) militants.

- Dozens of people have been killed in clashes and airstrikes since the violence broke out, including a 30-year-old Indian woman in Israel who was killed in a rocket attack by Palestinian militants from Gaza.

Key Points

- **India's Stand:** At the [UN Security Council](#) meeting, India expressed deep concern at the [clashes and violence in Jerusalem](#) and called on both sides to avoid changing the status-quo on the ground.
 - India's Permanent Representative to the UN, stressed the need to **immediately resume direct peace talks** and commitment to a two-state solution.
- **US Stand:** The US President has also called for de-escalation of the deadly violence that has claimed dozens of lives.
 - However, the US added that Israel has a right to defend itself if it is attacked by thousands of rockets.
- **Response by the Arab World:** Iran, Qatar and Turkey completely support the Palestinian cause and are backing Hamas.
 - UAE and Saudi Arabia are almost [de facto allies of Israel](#).

Israel - Palestine

- **The Conflict:** It is linked to the age-old **tussle over identity and land** starting with Jerusalem.
 - In the **first Arab Israel war of 1948**, the Israelis captured the western half of the city, and Jordan took the eastern part which Israel later captured and annexed.
 - Since then, Israel has expanded settlements in East Jerusalem.
 - The Palestinians want to make East Jerusalem the capital of their yet to be formed state.
 - Israel sees the whole city as its "unified, eternal capital", whereas the Palestinian leadership denies for any compromise unless East Jerusalem is recognised as the capital of future Palestinian state.
 - The **Palestinians** are facing the **threat of eviction from Sheikh Jarrah**, a neighbourhood in east Jerusalem. Their land is to be given to the Jewish settlers.
 - Moreover, the Israeli armed forces have recently attacked the Al-Aqsa Mosque ahead of a march by Zionist nationalists.
 - The Al Aqsa Mosque is the third holiest shrine for Islam after Mecca and Medina.
 - It created a fear for the followers, all over the region and the radicals began to call for defending the Al Aqsa Mosque.
 - Also, 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.
- The **current outbreak of violence is the most severe one since 2014** involving the rocket-firing by the Palestinians and the air-strikes conducted by Israelis in retaliation.



Factors Triggering the Conflict

- **Hamas in Rule in Palestine:** Hamas, found in 1987, is a violent offshoot of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood seeking "to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine" through violent jihad.

- The Palestinian President is quite old age and hence, senile and unable to fight for the cause.
- So, **Hamas is the more radical faction of the Palestinians which has now started retaliating.**
- The so-called president authority of Palestine is neither conducting elections, nor functioning properly, the dictatorship of the Hamas and Israeli seizure of territories and limitations is aggravating the Palestinians.
- **Political Instability in Both the States:** There is **incapability and stagnation in the leadership structures** on the both sides thus leading to too many groups getting out of control, who are resorting to maximum violence.
 - Moreover, **Israel has had 4 elections in the last two years** and all of them were inconclusive. The Prime Minister of Israel has retained his post but only in a caretaker form.
- **Divided Israel:** The Israelis are all highly divided.
 - The **Arabian Israelis** who are just 20% of the population, **identify with the Palestinians** due to the same ethnicity.
 - The Arabian Israelis and the far-right community of Israel are engaging in civil war like activities inside the country.
- **Issues with the Palestinian People:** The ground sentiments of the Palestinians are also changing, the **majority of them saying they do not want a two state solution.**
 - It is also not decided if Hamas will rule over the Palestinian state or the Fatah or neither of these.
 - The **Palestinians have been a divide lot between between the Hamas and the Fatah** and the two are moving on the different tracks which is the main reason for the defeat of the ultimate Palestinian cause.
 - United Palestine with the help from the Arab world and the other countries could have achieved much more than it is achieving now.
 - They are **geographically separated by Israeli territory** so it is not a viable state anymore, plus, the **land going into the Jewish hands is further aggravating the Palestinians.**
- **The US Losing its Significance in the Region:** The US is preventing the meeting from taking place at the UNSC for Palestinian cause and **completely recognises the rights of Israelis** to defend themselves.
 - The US President recognising Jerusalem as Israel's de facto capital also became a major problem.
 - The US, under President Joe Biden, **does not have much leverage on Israel**, unlike the US under Donald Trump who clearly supported Israel. **They are trying to be more even handed.**
 - Although the current administration in the US has talked about being neutral, it **hasn't invested much diplomatic energy in this conflict.**

Way Forward

- **Change in Leadership:** The leadership and generational change in politics of the two States is really very crucial.
 - Both the Israeli and Palestinian Prime Ministers have been in power for quite long. Ideally, they shall step aside, the domestic survival politics for power and the desire of holding on to their chairs is overriding the broader interest of the region and its people.
 - There is hope for the newer generation to come and rethink for a two state solution.
 - Also, bringing Hamas into moderation is much required.
- **Preventing Disproportionate Retaliation:** There has to be a certain extent for both the states upto which they can retaliate, disproportionate use of force is not a solution, it will only create more terrorism and extremism.
- **Role of the Regional Players:** The regional players like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE possibly have a better pathway for peace talk than the US. The US does not have as much hold over the region as it used to have.
 - Qatar and Egypt are already working closely to bring peace.
- **India's role:** India believes that peace talks are the only way ahead for stability to come in the region and ending this decades old conflict.
 - India has close relationships with both the states and it supports Palestine but choosing one

over the other is not wise.

- However, Palestine wants, to some extent, India to act as interlocutor as their faith does not lie much within the US, China or Russia.

Conclusion

- The situation on the ground is really bad, the tensions are escalating and looking at the complex issues involved, the issue does not seem to be getting solved in the near future.
- Peace talks have been taking place for at least 2 decades but in vain. However, India's stand still remains for peace talks.
- Both sides have to come for a possible solution which is in mutual interest but that can happen only through talks and not bloodshed.

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