**[A predictable tragedy](https://www.dawn.com/news/1781358/a-predictable-tragedy)**

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THE [eruption](https://www.dawn.com/news/1779807) of the Israel-Palestinian conflict and war in Gaza was a crisis waiting to happen. The conditions for this [tragic turn of events](https://www.dawn.com/news/1781364/barbaric-israeli-bombing-creates-million-refugees) were created by Israel’s brutal occupation of Palestine for over seven decades.

Israel’s forever ‘war’ on the Palestinians has involved intensifying aggression against the Palestinian people, settler violence, human rights atrocities, desecration of Muslim holy places and the most vicious form of apartheid in modern history.

Palestinians have been forced out of their homeland, deprived of their land and subjected to unceasing repression, arbitrary arrests and collective punishment. They have seen entire neighbourhoods demolished and people uprooted to make way for illegal Israeli settlements.

This has inflicted untold suffering on a dispossessed and displaced people. Gaza’s over two million inhabitants have struggled for 16 years with an Israeli-imposed blockade and cruel restrictions that have wreaked havoc in their lives in a territory described as the world’s [largest open-air prison](https://www.nrc.no/news/2018/april/gaza-the-worlds-largest-open-air-prison/).

Against this backdrop of historical injustice, it was no surprise for the combustible situation to explode with the [Oct 7 military assault](https://www.dawn.com/news/1779807) on Israel by the Palestinian resistance group, Hamas. Israel’s ferocious and indiscriminate retaliation added another grim chapter to Palestine’s tragedy.

Israel vowed “mighty revenge” and [imposed a siege](https://www.dawn.com/news/1780133/israel-imposes-total-siege-on-gaza-cuts-off-water-supply-as-dozens-more-palestinians-killed) on Gaza. It unleashed its firepower on a narrow, impoverished, densely populated strip of territory, carrying out unrelenting bombing of residential buildings, refugee camps and schools — a war crime. This claimed over 2,200 Palestinian lives, including 700 children, and displaced close to half a million people.

The UN human rights chief [called](https://www.dawn.com/news/1781042/as-israeli-bombardment-continues-un-expert-warns-palestinians-in-grave-danger-of-mass-ethnic-cleansing#:~:text=EU%2C-,UN,-call%20evacuation%20plan) the siege a contravention of international humanitarian law. The EU’s top diplomat Josep Borrell also described Israel’s siege of Gaza as illegal. By cutting off electricity, water, food and fuel supplies to Gaza, Israel created a dire situation. Its military also ordered 1.1m people to leave northern Gaza. A humanitarian catastrophe is now unfolding with the UN warning of calamitous consequences.

As this tragedy unfolded the international community did little. Unconcerned by the Palestinian plight, Western countries declared their unconditional support for ‘Israel’s right to defend itself’. The US, Israel’s principal benefactor, announced more military assistance for Tel Aviv, sent an aircraft carrier to the eastern Mediterranean and dispatched “advanced armaments”. While no one should condone the killing of innocent civilians by either side, Western governments didn’t utter a word about civilian Palestinian casualties, expressing outrage only at the loss of Israeli lives.

As Israeli air strikes continued, reducing entire neighbourhoods to rubble, the OIC issued a [statement](https://www.oic-oci.org/topic/?t_id=39735&t_ref=26689&lan=en) condemning the “continuing Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian people” and proclaimed that continuing occupation is the cause of instability.

But the 57-member organisation of Muslim states contemplated no collective action. Nor were Arab countries, who in recent years established diplomatic relations with Israel, asked to suspend those ties. In fact, their normalisation policy towards Israel emboldened Tel Aviv to act with the impunity it has in its war on Gaza. An emergency Arab League meeting demanded Israel end its siege of Gaza and left it at that.

Once again, the UN Security Council failed to live up to its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It met in emergency (closed) session on Oct 8 to discuss the situation but this ended in [deadlock](https://www.oic-oci.org/topic/?t_id=39735&t_ref=26689&lan=en) when the Council was unable to even issue a statement. Western countries are reported to have only wanted harsh condemnation of Hamas and showed no interest in calling for de-escalation.

The Russian representative pressed in vain for the Council to call for a ceasefire and “meaningful negotiations”. A second Security Council meeting on Oct 13 also saw sharp disagreements. Russia proposed a “humanitarian ceasefire” and circulated a resolution urging this and protection of civilians. It got no traction from the P3 — US, UK and France — and with a vote on it yet to be scheduled, action on this is unlikely. This has left the Council derelict in its duty to bring a halt to the violence.

This wasn’t the first time the UN body was unable to act on an issue that, like the Kashmir dispute, has been on the agenda of the UN almost since its inception. Scores of UNSC and General Assembly resolutions have called for a resolution of the issue and an end to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine. There are at least 88 Security Council resolutions on the Palestine question.

The answer to the dispute, the oldest on the UN agenda, has long been spelt out in several resolutions — a two-state solution that ensures a viable, independent and contiguous State of Palestine.

But Israel was encouraged years back by blanket Western support, especially former US president [Donald Trump’s policies](https://www.dawn.com/news/1531253) to abandon the two-state ‘solution’ and instead seek to impose a one-state ‘solution’, expanding illegal settlements in violation of Security Council resolutions and defiance of international demands to cease this activity.

Inaction on these resolutions is an indictment of those members of the global community who possess the power to change the situation but are unwilling to act because of a blind commitment to Israel and contrary to their claims to respect international law.

For his part, UN Secretary General António Guterres said the most recent flare-up of violence “does not come in a vacuum” but “grows out of a long-standing conflict, with a 56-year-long occupation with no end in sight”. He urged an end to the bloodshed and asserted that “only a negotiated peace” reflecting the “long-held vision of a two-state solution, in line with UN resolutions — can bring long-term stability to the people of this land and the wider Middle East region.” He also urged Israel to “reconsider” its evacuation order.

Such entreaties fell on deaf ears in Israel. With Israel planning a ground invasion and reoccupation of Gaza the outcome of the crisis is unclear with the danger of regionalisation of the war. What seems certain is that efforts at regional normalisation, notably between Saudi Arabia and Israel, are for now dead in the water.

Also apparent is the lesson of the past several decades — no amount of firepower and repression can break an occupied people’s will to resist.

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