

THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE AND THE UNITED NATIONS

The “Question of Palestine” has been on the agenda of the United Nations since the Organization’s earliest days. It has been the subject of countless hours of debate, discussion and negotiation. Yet, despite all efforts, this question remains unresolved, and continues to require the urgent attention of the international community in order to finally achieve the stated objective: a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine based on international law, relevant United Nations resolutions and on the fundamental principles of an end to the occupation, respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace with their neighbours, and the recognition and fulfilment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The UN General Assembly determined that the inalienable rights included: the right to self-determination without external interference; the right to national independence and sovereignty; and the right of Palestinians to return to their homes and property [resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974].



UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL INFORMATION PROGRAMME ON
THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Produced by the United Nations Department of Public Information

PARTITION PLAN

When the United Nations was founded in 1945, Palestine, considered a holy land for Christians, Jews and Muslims, was administered by the United Kingdom, under a mandate received in 1922 from the League of Nations. In 1947, as the British mandate of Palestine was coming to an end, the United Nations General Assembly proposed a partition of the land. It envisaged independent Arab and Jewish States and a special international regime for Jerusalem. The plan was accepted by the Jewish Agency for Palestine, but not by the Arab states on the ground that it violated the provisions of the UN Charter, which recognized the respect for the principle of self-determination of peoples. In 1948, as a result of the war between Israel and neighbouring Arab states, almost 750,000 Palestinians were uprooted, dispossessed and became refugees.

The State of Israel was established in 1948.
The Arab State Palestine – did not come into being.



UN Photo/LM
Palestinians from Al Faluja fleeing conflict area. [On or around 26 February 1949]



UN Photo
The United Nations observers and the UN flag have become well known to Palestinian children since late 1940s. 1948 [exact date unknown]

WAR, OCCUPATION AND SETTLEMENTS

In 1967, following another Arab-Israeli war, Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as Egyptian Sinai and the Syrian Golan. At least 500,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homes; about half of them for a second time since 1948.

The Security Council responded by adopting resolution 242, which called for withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the conflict, termination of all claims or states of belligerency, and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized borders.

Since 1967, successive Israeli Governments have established settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). The total settler population in the OPT, including East Jerusalem was estimated at more than 570,000, according to the 2016 Middle East Quartet report. The Israeli settlement activities are considered illegal under international law. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits such activities, stipulating: “The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.”



UNRWA Photo by Shareef Sarhan. Children on their way to school in Gaza, 2012

Today, Palestinians continue to live under the occupation regime accompanied by economic hardship, violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and violence which escalated on several occasions into open armed conflict resulting in numerous civilian casualties and massive destruction.



Courtesy of ActiveStills Collective
Bethlehem terminal during Ramadan, West Bank.
12 September 2008

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), principal judicial organ of the United Nations, rendered an Advisory Opinion in July 2004, confirming that “the construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated régime, are contrary to international law.”



Photo by Mussa Qawasma
A Palestinian woman at an Israeli checkpoint in the West Bank Al-Fawwar refugee camp.
16 August 2016



Courtesy of ActiveStills Collective
Protesters march during a demonstration against Israeli settlements and occupation in Nabi Saleh, West Bank. 8 January 2010

UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established by the UN General Assembly in 1949 to provide emergency assistance to the Palestine refugees. Today, the Agency provides assistance and protection to some 5 million registered Palestine refugees (out of more than 11 million Palestinians worldwide) who live in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. UNRWA's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance.

In addition, other United Nations specialized agencies and programmes, including the World Bank, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Development Programme, the UN Population Fund, and the World Food Programme (WFP) also continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian people in various fields, including food provision, education, development and agriculture.

An estimated 1.6 million Palestinians, about 33% of the population in the OPT, are food-insecure. Most of Palestine is facing water shortages, with the crisis being particularly acute in Gaza.



WFP Photo/Eyad al Baba
WFP humanitarian convoy crosses from Egypt into the Gaza Strip.
Gaza-Egypt border, Rafah, 27 August 2014



UNRWA Photo
In January 2014, when UNRWA was able to complete its first humanitarian distribution in Yarmouk camp for the Palestine refugees after almost six months of siege, it was met by thousands of desperate residents on the destroyed main street.
Yarmouk Refugee Camp, Damascus, Syria



UNICEF Photo by Loulou d'Aki
Midwives are checking the health of a baby and her mother as part of a UNICEF postnatal home visit programme. Gaza, 2016



Photo by Austin Haeberle
Participants in the UN annual training programme for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists.
United Nations, New York, November 2014



UNRWA Photo by Shaza Ghadia
UNRWA works to promote the psychosocial well-being of Palestine refugee children in the West Bank. August, 2016

In 1975, the UN General Assembly, in its resolution 3376, established the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and requested it to recommend a programme of implementation to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights to self-determination without external interference, national independence and sovereignty; and to return to their homes and property from which they had been displaced.

In 1977, the General Assembly called for the annual observance of 29 November as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. On that day, in 1947, the Assembly adopted the resolution on the partition of Palestine.



UN Photo/Kim Haughton
The UN General Assembly observes the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.
United Nations, New York, 29 November 2017



UN Photo/Anita Mathur
The Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the UN meet with UN Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres.
United Nations, New York, 22 March 2017

SEARCH FOR A TWO-STATE SOLUTION

In April 2003, the European Union, the United States, the Russian Federation and the United Nations – also known as the Quartet – presented a peace initiative, a “Road Map”, envisaging a permanent two-State solution. The plan was endorsed by Security Council resolution 1515 (2003). The Road Map called for an agreement ending the conflict and the occupation and leading to two States – Israel and Palestine – living side-by-side in peace, security and mutual recognition. Each State must uphold commitments to ensure equal civil rights for all its citizens and to respect human rights and human dignity. Jerusalem must emerge through negotiations as the future capital of two States. There should also be an agreed, just, fair and realistic solution to the refugee issue.



Photo by Vince Musi/The White House
Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shakes hands with his Palestinian counterpart, Yasser Arafat; with U.S. President Bill Clinton after the signing of the Declaration of Principles also known as the “Oslo Accord.”
The White House, Washington, D.C., United States. 13 September 1993

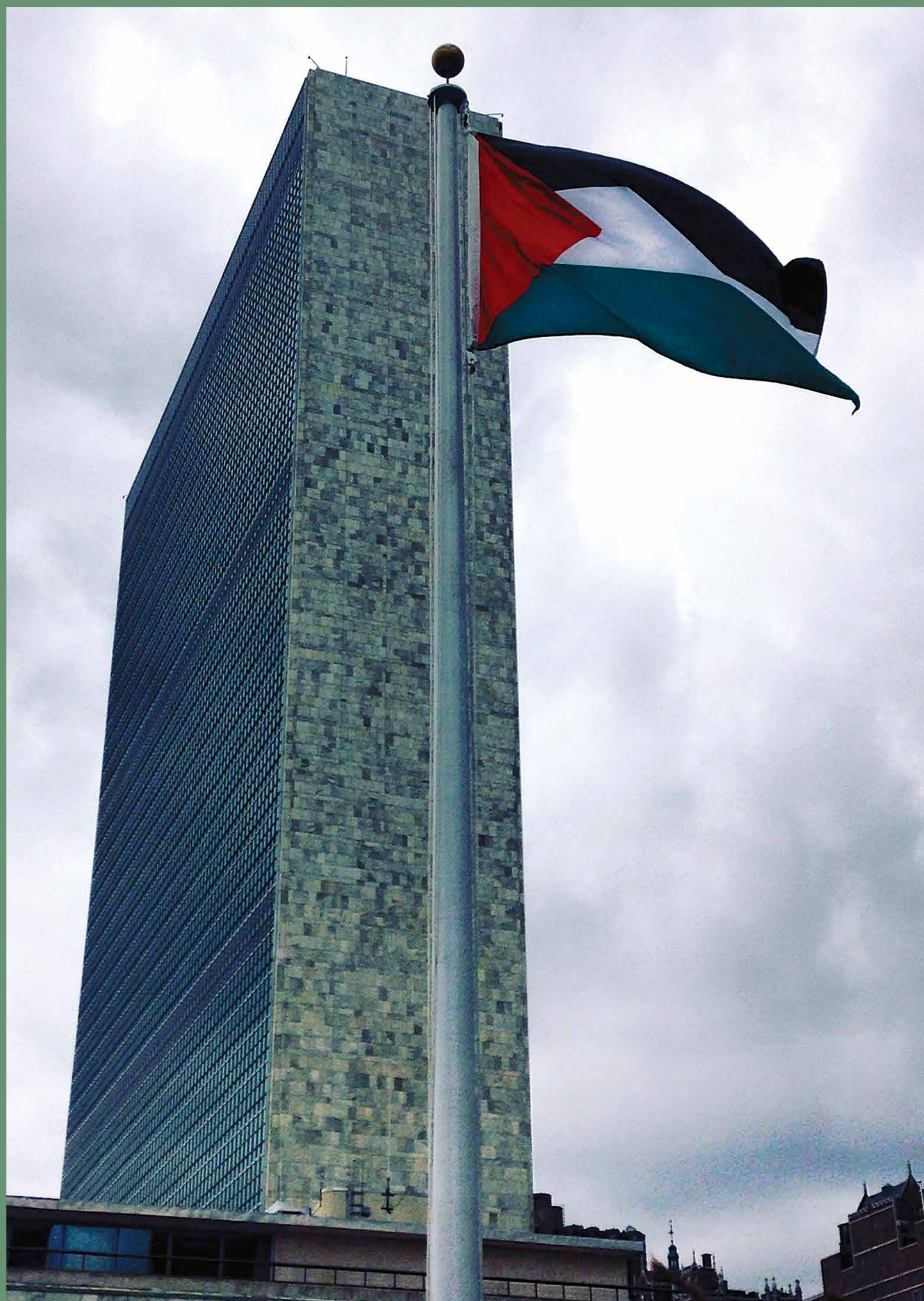
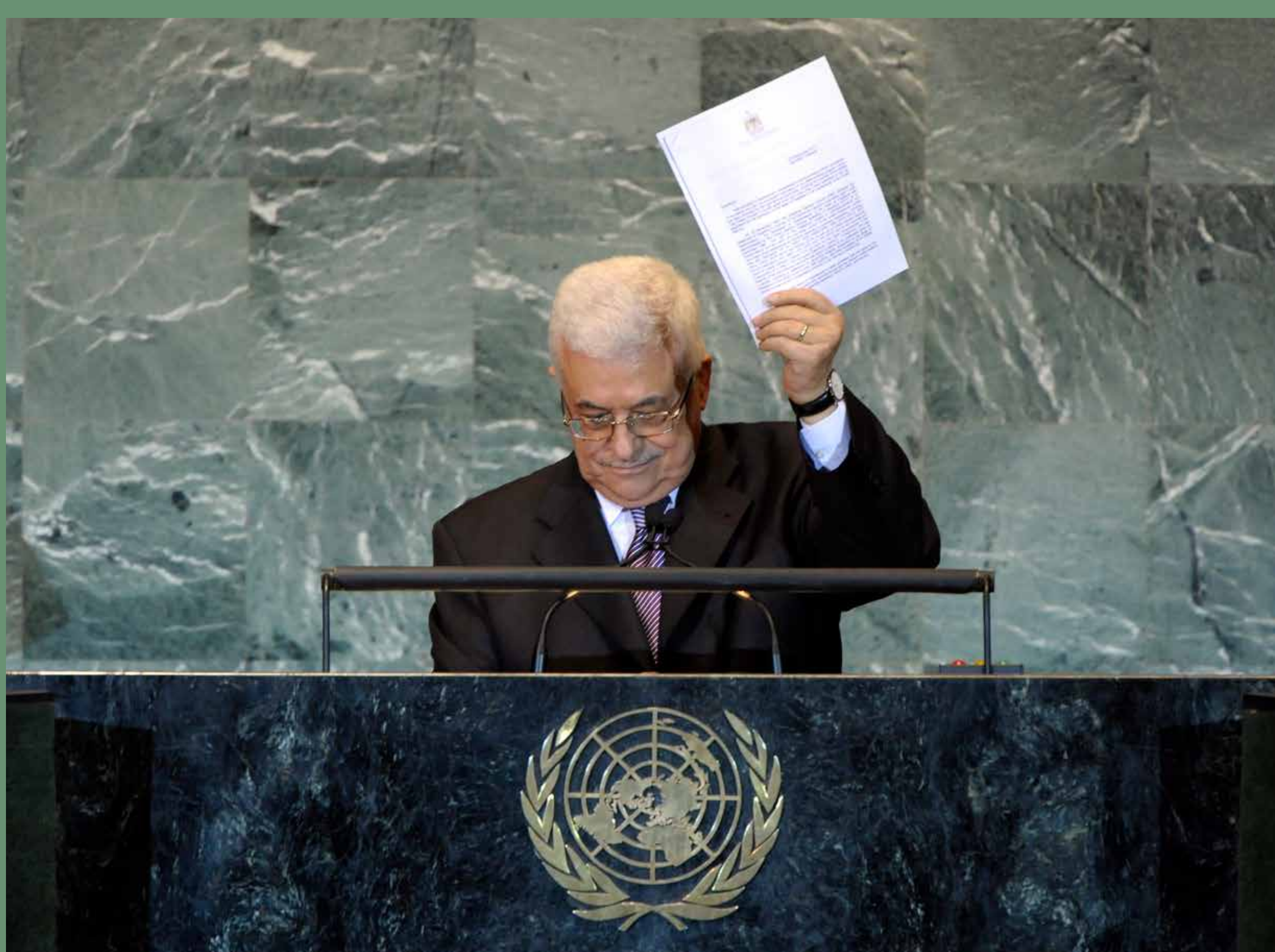


Photo by UN Social Media Team/Isabella Pöschl
The flag of the State of Palestine was raised for the first time at UN Headquarters in New York. 30 September 2015



UN Photo/Marco Castro
President Mahmoud Abbas shows a copy of the application for full UN membership which he submitted only moments before his speech. United Nations, New York.
23 September 2011

Despite the pronounced commitment to the road map by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority and a series of international initiatives aimed at moving it forward, the plan has not been implemented.

In the absence of progress on the two-State solution, the General Assembly adopted on 29 November 2012 resolution 67/19, granting to Palestine non-member observer State status. On 30 September 2015, the Palestinian flag was raised for the first time at the UN Headquarters in New York.

BUILDING THE FUTURE

With the State of Palestine gaining more international recognition, it has domestically focused on developing social and economic institutions, and the political and legislative frameworks aimed at advancing Palestinian statehood. The international community, including United Nations bodies, have provided strong support for those efforts.



Courtesy of 2011 Graduates of Journalism
Palestinian universities have been key contributors to creating a new generation of professionals in various fields. Some of the graduates depicted in this photo are also alumni of the UN Training Programme for Palestinian Journalists. Birzeit University. Ramallah, West Bank. June 2011



UNRWA Photo/Shareef Sarhan
Gazan singer Mohammed Assaf, winner of the Arab Idol in 2013 and UNRWA Regional Youth Ambassador. Gaza, 2014



UNRWA Photo/Fadi Thabet
Girls playing as part of the UNRWA-run community mental health programme in Gaza schools. 2015



UNRWA Photo/Alaa Ghosheh
Ms. Hanan Al-Hroub, a Palestinian teacher who was awarded with the prestigious Global Teacher Prize. 2016



UN Photo/Shareef Sarhan
A group of students from the Khan Younis Training Centre in Gaza, run by UNRWA, assemble a Formula 1-style car out of mostly recycled parts. Khan Younis, Gaza. 9 June 2011

TIMELINE

1947 The General Assembly adopts resolution 181, known as the partition plan of Palestine. It calls for the creation of an Arab and a Jewish State in Palestine, with a special international status for Jerusalem.

1948 Britain relinquishes its Mandate over Palestine, and on 14 May, the State of Israel is proclaimed. Fierce hostilities break out between the Arab and Jewish communities. The next day, regular troops of the neighbouring Arab countries enter the territory to assist the Palestinian Arabs. The fighting was halted under a truce called for by the Security Council on 29 May, to be supervised by the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

1949 Under United Nations auspices, armistice agreements are signed between Israel and the neighbouring Arab States, establishing the Armistice Line, also known as the Green Line.

1967 and **1973** Following two wars, the Security Council, in its resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), lays out the principles for a just and lasting peace, stresses the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war, and calls for negotiations to achieve that objective.

1967 The construction of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) starts soon after the 1967 war, in contravention of international law. Despite the Security Council calling on Israel to cease settlement activities and to dismantle settlements, they continue to be constructed in the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, to this day.

1974 The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is recognized by the General Assembly as the representative of the Palestinian people and is granted observer status.

1975 The General Assembly establishes the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and requests it to recommend a programme of action to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights, including to self-determination.

1977 The General Assembly adopts resolution 32/40B, calling for the annual observance of 29 November as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

1987 The first Palestinian uprising (the first intifada) against Israeli occupation begins.

1988 The Palestine National Council, the Palestinian movement's "parliament in exile," proclaims the independence of the State of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital, and in accordance with international law, including General Assembly resolution 181 (II).

1991 The Madrid Peace Conference is convened, bringing the parties face-to-face for the first time, and creating bilateral negotiation tracks for Israel and neighbouring Arab States and the Palestinians. The Conference's terms of reference, including the principle of "land for peace," continue to be the benchmarks for a negotiated solution of the conflict.

1993 Following secret talks in Oslo, Norway, between Israel and the PLO, the two sides exchange letters of mutual recognition. In a ceremony at the White House in Washington, D.C., they sign the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, launching the peace process between the two sides. The first intifada starts to subside.

1994 Palestinian Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat returns to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and establishes the Palestinian National Authority in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

1995 The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement (Oslo-II) is signed, dissolving the Israeli civil administration and assigning varying degrees of Israeli and Palestinian responsibilities over areas of the West Bank. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated in Tel Aviv by an Israeli extremist on 4 November.

1996 In the first general election held in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Yasser Arafat is elected President of the Palestinian Authority.

2000 The second (Al-Aqsa) intifada begins.

2002 The Arab Peace Initiative is announced at an Arab League Summit in Beirut. The European Union, the United States, the Russian Federation and the United Nations — also known as the Quartet — launch a "Road Map" envisaging a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel begins construction of a wall around and inside the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

2003 The Road Map is endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1515 (2003) and both Israel and the Palestinian Authority make a commitment to implementing the plan.

2004 The International Court of Justice determines in an advisory opinion on 9 July that the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and its associated regime are contrary to international law and that Israel is obliged to dismantle the structure situated within the territory occupied since 1967. Yasser Arafat, who had been in declining health, dies in a hospital in France on 11 November.

2005 The second intifada starts to subside. Israel redeploys its forces from inside the Gaza Strip.

2006 The General Assembly adopts resolution ES-10/17 to establish the UN Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

2008 Israel launches a military operation, "Operation Cast Lead," in the Gaza Strip, from 27 December 2008 to 18 January 2009, in response to rocket attacks. An estimated 1,300 people are killed and 5,300 people injured on the Palestinian side, while 14 people are killed and 530 people injured on the Israeli side. Widespread destruction of Palestinian homes and property is inflicted.

2010 U.S. President Barack Obama reaffirms his commitment to helping the parties achieve a two-State solution during his General Assembly speech.

2011 President Mahmoud Abbas submits an application for Palestine to become a UN Member State on 23 September. UNESCO admits Palestine as a Member State on 31 October.

2012 The General Assembly adopts resolution 67/19, granting to Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations on 29 November.

2013 The General Assembly adopts resolution 68/12, proclaiming 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

2014 Another round of violence erupts and Israel launches "Operation Protective Edge" in the Gaza Strip, from 8 July to 26 August. More than 2,100 Palestinian are killed and more than 11,000 injured. On the Israeli side, 72 were killed and some 580 injured.

2015 Palestine joins the International Criminal Court (ICC) on 1 April. On 30 September, the Palestinian flag is raised for the first time at the United Nations following an address delivered by President Mahmoud Abbas to the UN General Assembly.

2016 The Security Council adopts resolution 2334 on 23 December reaffirming Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as having no legal validity and constituting a flagrant violation under international law, as well as constituting a major obstacle to the two-State solution. The resolution also condemns all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation, incitement and destruction, and reiterates its vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders.

2017 Meeting at the emergency special session on 21 December, the General Assembly adopts the resolution "Status of Jerusalem" (ES-10/19), by which it declares "null and void" any actions intended to alter Jerusalem's character, status or demographic composition; calls on all States to refrain from establishing embassies in the Holy City; and demands that they comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions and work to reverse the "negative trends" imperiling a two-State resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.