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].
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.
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.”

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.
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.

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.
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.

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.
including to self-determination. It requests it to recommend a programme of action to enable the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, including to self-determination, and is granted observer status. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is recognized by the General Assembly as the representative of the Palestinian people and is granted observer status.

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.

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.

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

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 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.

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

The General Assembly adopts resolution 181, known as the partition plan of Palestine.

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

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.

The Madrid Peace Conference is convened, bringing 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).

Israel begins construction of a wall around and inside the West Bank, 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.

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

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 the partition plan of Palestine.

The Madrid Peace Conference is convened, bringing 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).

President Yasser Arafat is elected President of the Palestine National Authority in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Resolution 181, known as the partition plan of Palestine.

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.

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.

The Madrid Peace Conference is convened, bringing 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).

President Yasser Arafat is elected President of the Palestine National Authority in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

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

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 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.

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

The General Assembly adopts resolution 181, known as the partition plan of Palestine.

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.

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.

The Madrid Peace Conference is convened, bringing 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).

The Jerusalem Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, also known as the Oslo Accords, is signed by Israel and the PLO.

The Road Map is endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1515 (2000) and both Israel and the Palestinian Authority make a commitment to implementing the plan.

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.

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

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.

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 34 people are killed and 330 people injured on the Israeli side. Widespread destruction of Palestinian homes and property is inflicted.

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

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.

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

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

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

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.

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 based on two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders.

Meeting at the emergency special session on 21 December, the General Assembly adopts resolution “Status of Jerusalem” (ES-10/17), 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 the General Assembly’s resolutions and work to reverse the “negative trends” impeding a two-State resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.