

# Table of Contents

## **Letter from the Chair**

### **Crisis Committees**

Writing Notes

Public Directives

Objectives

Thoughts to Consider

### **Background**

Humanitarian Aid - an Evolution

Israel and Palestine

The Rise of Hamas

### **Current Situation**

October 7th, 2023

Humanitarian Concerns - The First Two Weeks

The Humanitarian Aid Crisis Response Committee

### **Factors to Consider**

Mediums of Aid Delivery

Political Navigations

## **Letter from the Chair**

*Greetings Delegates,*

*My name is Ethan Upson, and I am a senior at Brown University studying Business Economics and Entrepreneurship. This is my eighth year of involvement in Model United Nations and my third year serving as a chair for SWFLMUN.*

*I am thrilled to be involved in the deliverance of SWFLMUN's first true "crisis" committee. This will be a particularly dynamic environment for debate, as the decisions that delegates make will directly affect the ever-evolving crisis throughout the course of the committee.*

*The issues that underpin the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are complex, and the conflict will bring to the forefront deeply held and often conflicting views about the best ways forward. My thoughts are with the individuals and families most directly impacted by the violence and those who remain in fear as the conflict persists. Moreover, I know many of you share my concern for the members of our own SWFL community who have experienced loss or are concerned about loved ones in the region.*

*This committee aims to make unified efforts toward delivering humanitarian aid to the innocent civilians affected by the conflict. The committee will remain focused on this objective throughout the course of the debate. It will not work to draft a two-state solution or any other complexities related to the situation.*

*With that being said, this committee will differ from standard crisis committees in that all members will share a common objective. Crisis committees often reward delegates who work "against" the committee through espionage or conspiracy. Given the nature of this geopolitical conflict, under no circumstances will any delegate deliberately take actions to hinder the progress of the debate.*

*Please feel free to reach out with any questions, comments, or concerns regarding this committee.*

*I am looking forward to seeing you all at SWFLMUN in March.*

*Best,*

*Ethan*

*[ethan\\_upson@brown.edu](mailto:ethan_upson@brown.edu)*

## **Crisis Committees**

Crisis committees simulate formal bodies such as the board of directors of a corporation, a historical council, or a country's cabinet. These committees are smaller (typically at most 20 delegates) and differ from General Assemblies in that they demand dynamic, real-time problem-solving. The central topic of the crisis committee is the main “crisis” itself—an urgent problem or series of problems that the committee must aim to resolve. This could be an economic collapse, war, political scandal, natural disaster, or a historical event. The “crisis” will constantly evolve throughout the committee session as the staff introduces new developments and challenges.

In a General Assembly committee, delegates focus on one issue, and debate culminates in the authorship of resolution papers aiming to resolve this issue. Delegates in a crisis committee will author several “baby” versions of resolution papers called “public directives” throughout the committee in response to the updates provided by the crisis staff. Further, whereas delegates in a General Assembly represent a country and speak in the third person, delegates in a crisis act as their character and speak in the first person.

A crisis committee is separated into two parts—a “front room” and a “back room.” The Chair facilitates the debate in the front room, while the crisis staff manages the development of the committee in the back room. Delegates are given notepads at the start of the committee in which they write their “crisis notes”—actions they would like to take outside the committee. Notes are not shared with the rest of the committee, enabling delegates to take steps that may only benefit themselves.

Excellent performance in a crisis committee is defined by activity in debate and the development of substantive arcs in the back room. Performance in the back and front rooms will be weighted equally when determining placements.

### Writing Notes

Notes may take the form of private directives (a letter of personal intent—for example, “I plan to gather xyz resources”) or communiques (a letter to someone outside the committee—for example, “to my secretary, go to the store and purchase items xyz”). Crisis staffers will respond to notes in character, writing as whomever the note was addressed to.

Good crisis notes include a clear who, what, when, where, and why. It is up to the staffers to find flaws in notes (lack of detail, too much action with too little explanation, etc.) and respond accordingly. The intent is to guide the delegate towards a better note by throwing obstacles in their way. For example, if a delegate writes a note attempting to purchase a building but does not

explain where the building is located, where they will raise the funds, or who they will purchase it from, a staffer may respond:

*\*Delegate Name\*,*

*your attempt to purchase the building has failed. I am unsure what building you were referring to, and your finances are already thin. Perhaps consider a small location in the XYZ area.*

*Sincerely,*

*Crisis Staff*

Delegates should refer to their character descriptions, portfolio powers, and external research when writing notes. If the delegate attempting to purchase the building in the aforementioned example is known to be wealthy or has significant prior investment experience, they would not have to write a note obtaining funding to purchase the building. They could simply state something like “use the money in my personal checking account” in their note. If the delegate attempting to purchase the building is not known to be wealthy, they may have to write a separate note to obtain funding—perhaps a letter to a financial institution requesting a loan. Specificity is highly valued in crisis notes—having real locations, numbers, and dates will make it more likely for your note to accomplish what it was meant to. Delegates who write consistently specific notes demonstrate that they have spent considerable time researching and preparing for the committee.

Delegates will use notes in the back room to build their character arc throughout the entire course of the committee. Notes must take steps—if someone wants to run for president, they cannot just write a note saying they will run for president. They must run press releases, gather constituents, fundraise, and establish a campaign platform through several notes. Each note should only aim to accomplish one thing, and delegates should have a broader vision of what their “end game” will look like for the committee. The sky is the limit regarding what can reasonably be accomplished through crisis notes. So long as the notes are detailed and built upon each other, delegates could create new governments or even colonize planets.

Delegates may also work with each other to author joint crisis notes that combine their portfolio powers to accomplish a substantive action quickly. A joint crisis note must only be written in the notepad of one of the collaborators, but it must be signed by all participating. The more delegates participating in a joint crisis note, the more the note can accomplish.

The actions delegates take in the backroom will influence the contents of the updates provided by the crisis staff and consequently influence the debate in the committee.

## Public Directives

Public directives can be written at any time throughout the committee but are most often used to resolve a problem presented during a crisis update. Delegates can submit a public directive to the chair at any moment, but a motion to introduce public directives must be passed to make them eligible for voting. Crisis committees do not enter a standard General Assembly voting procedure to maximize debate efficiency when voting on public directives. These directives typically follow standard working paper formats with action statements separated by clauses. However, delegates may write a public directive in any format they choose if they believe it better fits the situation.

Unlike working papers in General Assembly committees, a public directive has no mandatory number of sponsors/clauses and does not require any signatories. This means that a delegate can author and submit a directive independently, which may be brief. However, such directives are typically more difficult to pass, as they may not represent the intentions of the broader committee.

Let us say that a crisis update was given in the previously mentioned U.S. Senate Committee, revealing that someone within the committee has received a sizable illegal bribe from an oil company. Delegates may pass a public directive that looks something like this:

*Public Directive: "Find the Snake!"*

*Sponsors: Chuck Schumer, Tammy Baldwin*

- 1. Select five members of the U.S. Senate at random to act as an impromptu Justice Board of the U.S. Senate*
- 2. Collect bank account statements from all members of the U.S. Senate Committee, to be reviewed by the newly selected Justice Board as to*
  - a. Identify suspicious transactions*
  - b. Present suspicious transactions to the general committee*
- 3. Impose a session-long voting censorship on members of the committee found to have engaged in suspicious transactions*

The delegates put at risk by this directive would have to convince the committee that such actions are unnecessary and unconstitutional to gather votes against it. The actions listed above are rather extreme, so it is not unlikely that the directive would fail if delegates properly advocated against it.

## Objectives

Delegates in a General Assembly committee will represent and uphold their country's foreign policy in debate. They will collaborate with allies and similar nations to draft resolution papers and negotiate solutions that align with their country's interests and stances on global issues.

A crisis delegate's objectives are slightly more ambiguous. Crisis committees involve a number of different issues—delegates must research the individual they are representing and draw conclusions as to what issues their character would focus on and how they might vote.

The crisis staff will interrupt the debate approximately every 30 minutes to present an update and a new set of problems. Interruptions may occur more often if the pace of debate slows or becomes redundant. Some updates are time-sensitive and require an immediate response, while others will simply update the state of the overall crisis to provide additional context for debate.

While the committee collaborates on public directives to address crisis updates, crisis notes are used to further an individual delegate's objectives. These are usually consistent with the objectives of the committee but pertain specifically to the individual and are often focused on building influence within the committee and in the overall crisis. However, there are no specific guidelines through which this should be accomplished. Delegates may take whatever approach they feel best fits their character.

For example, let's say that a delegate plays as Kevin Guthrie (executive director of the Florida Disaster Organization) in a crisis committee focused on providing disaster relief following a catastrophic hurricane. His primary interests relevant to the crisis itself would be to mitigate the impact of the hurricane on Florida's population and infrastructure, coordinate disaster responses with federal, state, and local agencies, communicate progress updates to affected communities, and ensure efficient resource mobilization to affected communities. Guthrie would also be interested in furthering his personal career objectives.

Guthrie leads a massive organization, so his primary portfolio powers (the things he will employ in his crisis notes and contributions to public directives) are that he oversees the entire spectrum of resources available to the Florida Disaster Organization (such as emergency personnel, equipment, and supplies), manages and allocates funds, and has connections to individuals in similar agencies and government bodies.

The delegate role-playing as Guthrie would contribute his resources when collaborating with other delegates on public directives. For example, if a crisis update disclosed that road access to a specific community has been obstructed by debris, Guthrie could add a clause such as:

1. *Allocate two specialized emergency response teams from the Florida Disaster Organization, each comprising 20 trained personnel equipped with heavy-duty machinery, including three bulldozers, two excavators, and four dump trucks, for efficient removal of debris to clear the obstructed roadways.*

Guthrie may use crisis notes to build two back room arcs simultaneously to support the interests of the committee and his own personal objectives. Below is an outline of how he might build each arc.

*Arc 1 (committee objectives):*

- *Note 1: Letter to personal secretary to assess resources*
- *Note 2: Letter to state government official requesting additional resources to supplement lacking areas (based on the secretary's response)*
- *Note 3: Letter to an executive of the National Guard requesting a permanent partnership to ensure adequate resources for future crises*

Guthrie could inform other delegates in the committee of the additional resources he had acquired and contribute them to future public directives.

*Arc 2 (personal objectives):*

- *Note 1: Letter to a personal connection in the federal government asking them to estimate your social standing with federal politicians and to refer you to some of their other political friends*
- *Notes 2-4: Letters to the referrals provided in the previous response offering personal favors*
- *Note 3: Letter to personal secretary asking them to prepare a press release sharing all of the substantive actions you've taken as leader of the Florida Disaster Organization to increase your public approval*
- *Note 4: Letter to the most influential of the political connections established in earlier notes requesting a referral to the President of the United States*
- *Note 5: Letter to the President requesting election to the position of Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)*

Once the delegate playing Guthrie has been placed in charge of FEMA, they will be able to contribute far more substantial resources to public directives. They will also become more influential in debate.

Specificity and realism will significantly contribute to the success of a delegate's crisis arc. However, concessions will often be made to the realism of actions and procedures (such as the process of getting appointed to Administrator of FEMA) for the sake of progress in committee.

### Planning a Crisis Arc

Delegates should address their first few notes to people close to their character (such as a secretary or peer within their organization) to ask for additional information regarding their current resources and powers. The responses provided by the crisis staff may differ slightly from reality to create an equal playing field for delegates. The next few notes are often spent establishing connections with relevant players outside the committee to be called upon for future endeavors. As previously mentioned, notes must take steps and build upon each other. It will be easier for a delegate to pursue something new later in the committee if they have already established a "base" for a new arc. It is helpful to prepare a list of relevant people and physical locations prior to the committee to incorporate specificity in crisis notes.

It is a good idea to plan arcs before the committee by writing an outline such as the one above. However, just as delegates in a General Assembly committee cannot prewrite clauses for resolution papers, **delegates in a crisis committee cannot prewrite notes**. Additionally, these outlines will almost certainly not apply in committee exactly as they are planned. Delegates will update their plans based on the crisis updates shared with the committee and the responses to their back room notes provided by the crisis staff.

The ever-evolving nature of a crisis committee makes it difficult to predict the final culmination of the debate. It depends on the actions of all of the delegates within the committee in the front and back rooms. However, it is likely consistent with some sort of resolution to the underlying crisis.

### Thoughts to Consider

Going into a crisis without prior experience can be daunting, but delegates are encouraged to learn through trial and error. It is better to try things over and over and fail over and over than to sit back and observe. The crisis staff is there to help you learn and succeed—if you are confused about something or unsure how to proceed, send a note to the chair or write a question for the staff in your notepad. Things often get hectic in a crisis committee, and even the most experienced delegates must ask for direction occasionally. Judges highly regard a delegate's growth and development throughout a committee.

Another key aspect of crisis is remaining adaptable. There are many things that could go wrong with a crisis arc, whether it be that the crisis staff would prefer a different direction than your



notes or that another delegate has already accomplished something you are trying to do. Delegates must remain ready to pivot directions.

Lastly, time management is one of the most challenging aspects of a crisis committee. Between giving speeches, writing notes, working on public directives, and collaborating during unmods, it can be difficult to avoid getting hung up on just one piece of the committee. Diversify your efforts and reallocate your attention to something else if it feels like you are running into a wall.

## **Background**

### Humanitarian Aid - an Evolution

Humanitarian aid is the provision of both material and logistic assistance to people struggling as a result of either natural or human-induced disaster. During armed conflict between states, the state subject to aid must consent to receive it. International humanitarian laws *theoretically* oblige states to consent to receive aid for the benefit of innocent civilians regardless of whether or not the civilians originate from the “enemy” state. According to the International Court of Justice, “There can be no doubt that the provision of strictly humanitarian aid to persons or forces in another country, whatever their political affiliations or objectives, cannot be regarded as unlawful intervention, or as in any other way contrary to international law.”<sup>1</sup>

Alternatively, political scholar J.L. Holzgrefe defines humanitarian intervention as “The threat or use of force across state borders by a state (or a group of states) aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals other than its own citizens, without the permission of the state within whose territory force is applied.”<sup>2</sup> Humanitarian intervention ultimately implies that a country has failed to protect its citizens.

The committee will be focused entirely on the provision of humanitarian aid.

Early instances of humanitarian aid date back to the 19th century, but it did not become common as a systemic response until post-World War II and the 1945 formation of the United Nations to “maintain international peace and security and to achieve cooperation among nations on economic, social, and humanitarian problems.”<sup>3</sup> This effectively acknowledged global responsibility for vulnerable populations, and the subsequent adoption of the Universal

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<sup>1</sup> "3.1 What is humanitarian intervention? - OpenLearn - Open University."

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/society-politics-law/the-use-force-international-law/content-section-3.1>. Accessed 10 Nov. 2023.

<sup>2</sup> "4 - Reforming the international law of humanitarian intervention."

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/humanitarian-intervention/reforming-the-international-law-of-humanitarian-intervention/156D250A5FF8A99991FA99FEC3A34003>. Accessed 10 Nov. 2023.

<sup>3</sup> "United Nations Charter (1945) - National Archives |." 15 Mar. 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/united-nations-charter>. Accessed 10 Nov. 2023.

Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 emphasized the commitment of international powers to address humanitarian concerns.<sup>4</sup>

The Geneva Conventions were adopted by the international community in 1949 to safeguard civilians during war. However, they fail to comprehensively address the legality of initiating war for humanitarian reasons.<sup>5</sup> This “loophole” has resulted in legal ambiguity in conflicts like the Syrian Civil War, where humanitarian crises and intervention legitimacy were deeply intertwined.<sup>6</sup>

Responsibility to Protect (R2P - “an international norm that seeks to ensure that the international community never again fails to halt the mass atrocity crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”) emerged in the early 21st century, redefining state sovereignty to include the responsibility of protecting citizens from atrocities.<sup>7</sup> The principles of R2P were designed with humanitarian intervention in mind but have been applied through the militarization of humanitarian aid. In conflicts such as those in Afghanistan, humanitarian aid was closely intertwined with military operations. NGOs were often embedded within military units, blurring the lines between humanitarian aid and humanitarian intervention and raising concerns about the neutrality and impartiality of aid workers.<sup>8</sup>

## Israel and Palestine

Israel was first established in 1948 when the British government publicly committed itself to the creation of a Jewish homeland. Arab nationalists fiercely opposed its creation, marking the beginning of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.<sup>9</sup> This led to several territory changes and displaced countless Palestinians in an event referred to as Nakba (or “catastrophe”).<sup>10</sup>

Conflicts between the two states have characterized the past several decades.

Notably, Hamas—a Palestinian Islamist political organization and militant group—was founded in 1987,<sup>11</sup> near the beginning of the First Intifada (a grassroots uprising against Israeli control following a culmination of grievances towards occupation and lack of economic progress).<sup>12</sup> The Israeli Defense Minister at the time, Yitzhak Rabin, established a policy of “might, power, and

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<sup>4</sup> “Universal Declaration of Human Rights - the United Nations.” <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>. Accessed 11 Nov. 2023.

<sup>5</sup> “The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols.” 29 Oct. 2010,

<https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions/overview-geneva-conventions.htm>. Accessed 10 Nov. 2023.

<sup>6</sup> “International Law and Humanitarian Intervention in the Syrian Civil ....” 12 May. 2020,

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2158244020919533>. Accessed 12 Nov. 2023.

<sup>7</sup> “What is R2P? - Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.” <https://www.globalr2p.org/what-is-r2p/>. Accessed 12 Nov. 2023.

<sup>8</sup> “Non-Governmental Aid Organisations in Afghanistan - JSTOR.” <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24232768>. Accessed 12 Nov. 2023.

<sup>9</sup> “Milestones: The Arab-Israeli War of 1948 - History State Gov.” <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/arab-israeli-war>. Accessed 12 Nov. 2023.

<sup>10</sup> “About the Nakba - Question of Palestine - the United Nations.” 16 May. 2023, <https://www.un.org/unispal/about-the-nakba/>. Accessed 12 Nov. 2023.

<sup>11</sup> “Hamas - National Counterterrorism Center | Groups.” <https://www.dni.gov/nctc/groups/hamas.html>. Accessed 12 Nov. 2023.

<sup>12</sup> “What you need to know about the 1987 Intifada - PBS.” 22 Mar. 2019,

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/women-war-and-peace/uncategorized/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-1987-intifada/>. Accessed 12 Nov. 2023.

beatings” that led to mass arrests.<sup>13</sup> Hamas primarily operated against Israeli occupation through military resistance but also offered social welfare programs to Palestinians.<sup>14</sup>

Negotiations surrounding the Oslo Accords in 1993 and 1995 were objectively the closest Israel and Palestine ever came to reaching a two-state solution. In 1993, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) collaborated to create the Oslo I Accord. It established mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO and founded the Palestinian Authority (PA) to oversee the territory under its control. Negotiations were continued in 1995 with the adoption of the Oslo II Accord, which expanded Palestinian self-rule into Gaza and the West Bank and assigned responsibility to Israel and the Palestinian police force to cooperate to maintain security. It divided the West Bank into three areas, each with varying degrees of Israeli and Palestinian control.<sup>15</sup>

Constituents on each side of the conflict heavily opposed the Oslo Accords. Palestinians felt the Accords heavily favored Israeli interests, and the fragmentation of Palestinian territory made it challenging to establish stability in the region. On the other hand, Israelis viewed the Accords as having failed to bring peace and security due to a rise in terrorist attacks committed by Palestinian militants throughout the 1990s.<sup>16</sup> Hamas was primarily responsible, committing a number of suicide bombings and attacks on Israeli military and civilian targets.<sup>17</sup>

The United States designated Hamas as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in 1997 due to its acts of violence targeting Israeli citizens and military personnel through suicide bombings and rocket firings.<sup>18</sup>

Tensions continued to increase between the two states. In 2000, the Second Intifada began. It was far more violent than the first, and death tolls rose high on both sides of the conflict. Israel initiated several military incursions into Palestine and constructed the West Bank Barrier, which they claimed was necessary to maintain security. The Second Intifada concluded in 2004.<sup>19</sup>

## The Rise of Hamas

The Fatah Party (the Palestinian Liberation Organization's leading party) dominated the Palestinian political landscape for much of its history. However, many Palestinians viewed it as

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<sup>13</sup> "First Intifada - Wikipedia." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Intifada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Intifada). Accessed 13 Nov. 2023.

<sup>14</sup> "Hamas - as a foreign terrorist organization - DNI.gov." [https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/hamas\\_fto.html](https://www.dni.gov/nctc/ftos/hamas_fto.html). Accessed 13 Nov. 2023.

<sup>15</sup> "Oslo Accords | Summary, Significance, & Breakdown - Britannica." 17 Oct. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Oslo-Accords>. Accessed 3 Dec. 2023.

<sup>16</sup> "Why the Oslo Peace Process Failed - Foreign Policy." 13 Sep. 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/09/13/oslo-accords-1993-anniversary-israel-palestine-peace-process-lessons/>. Accessed 3 Dec. 2023.

<sup>17</sup> "Suicide and Other Bombing Attacks in Israel Since the Declaration of ..." <https://embassies.gov.il/MFA/FOREIGNPOLICY/Terrorism/Palestinian/Pages/Suicide%20and%20Other%20Bombing%20Attacks%20in%20Israel%20Since.aspx>. Accessed 3 Dec. 2023.

<sup>18</sup> "Foreign Terrorist Organizations - United States Department of State." <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>. Accessed 3 Dec. 2023.

<sup>19</sup> "Second Intifada - Wikipedia." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second\\_Intifada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Intifada). Accessed 3 Dec. 2023.

corrupt and ineffective and expressed growing frustrations over time.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, Hamas garnered substantial grassroots support from Palestinians due to their strong stance against Israeli occupation and vast network of social support services, such as health clinics, schools, and welfare programs.<sup>21</sup> The Fatah Party frequently engaged in violent clashes with Hamas.

Hamas participated in the 2006 Palestinian legislative election and won a majority in Parliament in a major political upset. Countries and international organizations all over the world responded swiftly and imposed economic sanctions on the Palestinian Authority. The international community demanded that Hamas recognize Israel, announce violence, and uphold the previously established Israeli-Palestinian agreements.<sup>22</sup>

The violent clashes between Hamas and the Fatah continued to escalate until Hamas forcibly took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007. Fatah continued to control the West Bank.<sup>23</sup> Hamas has launched numerous attacks since taking over the Gaza Strip.

In 2018, Palestinian Activists organized “The Great March of Return” to assert the right of Palestinians to return to the homes they were displaced from the 1948 Nakba. Tens of thousands of Palestinians gathered at Israel’s borders, the majority of which were peaceful—however, some threw stones and launched incendiary devices into Israeli territory. The Israel Defense Force responded with various crowd control measures, including live ammunition, which generated significant civilian casualties. Various international humanitarian rights organizations heavily criticized this, as most protestors posed no immediate threat.<sup>24</sup>

Several instances of humanitarian aid diversion have occurred since Hamas took control. They’ve stolen fuel and food supplies from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and dismantled water pipes provided by the European Union to construct rocket fuselages. Additionally, Hamas has used provisions of international aid (such as the construction of schools funded by the United States) as a means of diverting resources from infrastructure development and instead funneling them into missiles and other weapons of destruction.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> "Palestinians: Hamas and PIJ - Wilson Center." 3 Nov. 2023, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/palestinians-hamas-and-pij>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2023.

<sup>21</sup> "What is Hamas? What to know about its origins, leaders and funding." 10 Oct. 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/what-is-hamas-what-to-know-about-its-origins-leaders-and-funding>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2023.

<sup>22</sup> "The victory of Hamas in 2006 legislative elections and the failure of ...." <https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/carc/2018/03/01/mapping-the-fatah-hamas-conflict/>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2023.

<sup>23</sup> "Hamas takes control of Gaza | Palestinian territories - The Guardian." 15 Jun. 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jun/15/israel4>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2023.

<sup>24</sup> "gaza - great march of return - UNRWA." <https://www.unrwa.org/campaign/gaza-great-march-return>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2023.

<sup>25</sup> "Opinion: Why isn't more humanitarian aid reaching Gazans?." 24 Oct. 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2023-10-24/israel-gaza-palestinians-humanitarian-aid>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2023.

## Current Situation

October 7th, 2023

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel from the blockaded Gaza Strip. They targeted nearby Israeli towns, killing and abducting civilians. October 7th was Simchat Torah, a major Jewish holiday.

Hamas fighters invaded along the coast using vehicles such as motorcycles and paragliders. Gun battles broke out, and militants took hostages in multiple towns.<sup>26</sup> In total, over 1200 Israeli and foreign nationals, mostly civilians, were reported killed.<sup>27</sup> 1,600 were wounded,<sup>28</sup> and 240 were taken as hostages.<sup>29</sup> It was the deadliest attack in Israel in decades.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu swiftly declared war on Hamas and vowed to use all military power to destroy them. The Israeli military launched airstrikes into Gaza—at least 232 Palestinians were killed and 1,700 wounded.<sup>30</sup>

Mohammed Deif, the leader of Hamas' military wing, stated that the attack was in response to a variety of grievances, including the long-standing blockade of Gaza, Israeli raids in West Bank cities, violence at Al Aqsa (the disputed Jerusalem holy site), attacks by settlers on Palestinians, and the growth of Israeli settlements.<sup>31</sup> Hamas representatives indicated preparedness for an extended conflict, emphasizing their readiness for "all options including all-out war."<sup>32</sup>

Israeli military aircraft dropped thousands of leaflets in the Northern Gaza Strip, warning civilians to evacuate the region. The IDF informed the United Nations that the entire population (approximately 1.1 million people) should relocate within 24 hours.<sup>33</sup> On October 13th, the IDF

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<sup>26</sup> "Hamas surprise attack out of Gaza stuns Israel and leaves hundreds ...." 7 Oct. 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-gaza-hamas-rockets-airstrikes-tel-aviv-11fb98655c256d54ecb5329284fc37d2>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

<sup>27</sup> "Israel revises Hamas attack death toll to 'around 1200' - Reuters." 10 Nov. 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-revises-death-toll-oct-7-hamas-attack-around-1200-2023-11-10/>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

<sup>28</sup> "IDF Reports 1,593 Wounded Since October 7, but Hospital Data Is ...." 10 Dec. 2023, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-12-10/ty-article/ premium/idf-reports-1-593-wounded-since-october-7-but-hospital-data-is-much-higher/0000018c-552d-df4b-a78e-d52f47ac0000>. Accessed 11 Dec. 2023.

<sup>29</sup> "Israel's Attackers Took About 240 Hostages. Here's What to Know ...." 20 Nov. 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/israel-hostages-hamas-explained.html>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

<sup>30</sup> "Netanyahu declares war on Hamas after surprise attack kills ... - PBS." 7 Oct. 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/netanyahu-declares-war-on-hamas-after-deadly-surprise-attack-kills-dozens-of-israelis>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

<sup>31</sup> "2023 Israel–Hamas war - Wikipedia." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2023\\_Israel–Hamas\\_war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2023_Israel–Hamas_war). Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

<sup>32</sup> "Hamas surprise attack war out of Gaza stuns Israel and leaves hundreds ...." 7 Oct. 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-gaza-hamas-rockets-airstrikes-tel-aviv-11fb98655c256d54ecb5329284fc37d2>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

<sup>33</sup> "Israel warns northern Gaza residents to leave, tells U.N. 1.1 million ...." 13 Oct. 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-military-tells-united-nations-over-one-million-palestinians-should-evacuate-southern-gaza-within-24-hours/>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

sent armored vehicles and infantry into the Gaza Strip to destroy Hamas and rescue the hostages they took.<sup>34</sup>

Israel issued a complete blockade on Gaza, preventing the transport of gas, food, medicine, water, or electricity into the region.<sup>35</sup>

Hamas is deeply integrated throughout civilian centers in the Gaza Strip. They have established most of their military infrastructures (such as HQs, armories, access routes, and defensive positions) directly within or close to civilian areas. They often fire artillery, mortars, and rockets from heavily populated civilian areas near facilities that should be protected under the Geneva Conventions (such as schools and hospitals). Hamas sometimes uses civilians to collect intelligence and combats the IDF near civilian neighborhoods.<sup>36</sup>

Representatives of approximately one hundred countries worldwide have reacted differently to the war. Forty-four nations have publicly condemned Hamas and recognized their tactics as terroristic. Some states (primarily regional players such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Kuwait, and Iraq) have blamed Israel for the attacks. About twenty countries have supported Israel's right to defend itself, while others have called for an immediate cease-fire and de-escalation of violence.<sup>37</sup>

### Humanitarian Concerns - The First Two Weeks

Gaza is one of the most densely populated regions on Earth, with about 15,000 people per square mile (comparable to the density of London). The population is also one of the youngest in the world—nearly 50% of residents are under the age of 18.<sup>38</sup>

Tens of thousands of people in Gaza receive consistent medical care. Seventy thousand people live with diabetes, over 2000 have been diagnosed with cancer, and about 1,000 need dialysis, according to the World Health Organization.<sup>39</sup> Healthcare systems in Gaza were already in a precarious situation prior to the conflict—only 35 hospitals in the region were operating at maximum capacity, offering a combined total of 3,412 available beds for a population that exceeds two million people.<sup>40</sup> The conflict will exacerbate the critical condition of healthcare.

<sup>34</sup> "Only the beginning' says Netanyahu as Israel makes first raids into ...." 13 Oct. 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/now-is-time-war-says-israels-military-chief-2023-10-12/>. Accessed 12 Dec. 2023.

<sup>35</sup> "Israel warns northern Gaza residents to leave, tells U.N. 1.1 million ...." 13 Oct. 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-military-tells-united-nations-over-one-million-palestinians-should-evacuate-southern-gaza-within-24-hours/>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

<sup>36</sup> "Hamas' use of human shields in Gaza - NATO StratCom." [https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/hamas\\_human\\_shields.pdf](https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/hamas_human_shields.pdf). Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

<sup>37</sup> "International Reactions to the Hamas Attack on Israel." 11 Oct. 2023, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/international-reactions-hamas-attack-israel>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

<sup>38</sup> "Gaza Strip map: How density matters in the Israel-Hamas conflict." 10 Oct. 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/specials/gaza-strip-map-density-israel-hamas-conflict/index.html>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

<sup>39</sup> "Palestinian Families Seek Medical Care Outside Besieged Gaza." 8 Dec. 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/palestinian-families-seek-medical-care-outside-besieged-gaza-78ee07ed>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

<sup>40</sup> "State of the health-care system in Gaza during the Israel–Hamas war." 1 Dec. 2023, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(23\)02634-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(23)02634-X/fulltext). Accessed 7 Dec. 2023.

Hospitals will close, medical facilities will be evacuated, supply chains will be interrupted, and medical infrastructure will be destroyed in the war.

At least one million residents of Gaza will be displaced in the coming weeks. The true number will likely be upwards of two million. These people seek shelter in schools, UN facilities, tents, cars, hospital courtyards, and the streets. Severe overcrowding is likely to increase the spread of disease exponentially. Medical needs will increase while the health system is reduced to a fraction of its pre-conflict capacity.

Israel's blockade, coupled with the destruction of key infrastructure such as roads and bridges, has generated a catastrophic water shortage—the majority of people have access to less than two cups of potable water per day.<sup>41</sup>

Border shutdowns and logistical challenges have severely impeded the ability of humanitarian aid organizations to deliver supplies and support to the region. The war has shut down all but one entry point into Gaza—a crossing at Rafah along the southern border with Egypt. Israel exerts a considerable influence on this entry point.<sup>42</sup>

### The Humanitarian Aid Crisis Response Committee

Today is October 17th, 2023—ten days after Hamas attacked Israel and four days after Israel invaded the Gaza Strip. Thousands of people have died. Millions more are at risk. The crisis is taking place in a region where traditional channels of aid, often led by bodies such as the United Nations, are hindered by deep-rooted political conflicts, geographic constraints, and the strategic influences of powerful states. The recent escalation in violence has produced circumstances that demand the immediate provision of humanitarian aid packages. Existing international mechanisms are unable to rise to the occasion.

Leaders of various humanitarian aid organizations, relief agencies, and interested countries have gathered to form the Humanitarian Aid Crisis Response Committee—a coalition of international powers pooling resources, networks, and expertise to devise innovative strategies to provide humanitarian aid to the crippled Gaza Strip. Each member of the committee adds a unique skillset and collection of resources. Some have extensive experience in logistics and supply chain management, while others bring crucial medical knowledge. Each member boasts an extensive network of politicians and local NGOs, crucial for acquiring on-the-ground intelligence and ensuring the deliverance of aid aligns with the needs of affected communities.

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<sup>41</sup> "Failing Gaza: undrinkable water, no access to toilets and little hope ...."

<https://www.oxfam.org/en/failing-gaza-undrinkable-water-no-access-toilets-and-little-hope-horizon>. Accessed 7 Dec. 2023.

<sup>42</sup> "Who controls the Rafah crossing and why is it so important to Gaza?." 17 Oct. 2023,

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/why-gazas-rafah-border-crossing-matters-why-egypt-is-keeping-it-shut-2023-10-17/>. Accessed 7 Dec. 2023.

The Humanitarian Aid Crisis Response Committee will operate beyond the limitations that political affiliations and national interests impose on international bodies. Free of time-consuming bureaucracies and procedures, the Committee will quickly develop dynamic solutions to an ever-evolving series of humanitarian challenges. The Committee will focus on the following primary objectives: improving access to clean water, food, and medical supplies; providing medical aid, trauma care, and psychological support to wounded and traumatized civilians; offering immediate shelter solutions, planning long-term housing strategies for displaced civilians, and providing dedicated support to the afflicted children of the region.

## **Factors to Consider**

### Mediums of Aid Delivery

Humanitarian aid has been delivered in various fashions throughout history, and the complex nature of Gaza's humanitarian crisis demands a multi-modal approach to aid delivery.

Ground-based transport is exceptionally limited due to Israel's blockade surrounding the region and control of the crossing at Rafah. Using cargo aircraft for airdrops could be a viable alternative, as demonstrated by the World Food Programme's operations in conflict zones with limited ground access, like South Sudan.<sup>43</sup> Alternatively, drones could deliver small-scale supplies (such as medications) to inaccessible areas and assess the region's needs, as seen in previous aid missions to Rwanda.<sup>44</sup>

It is possible to coordinate cross-border convoys of aid through diplomatic channels. This would require intricate negotiations to ensure safe passage, drawing on precedents like the UN-sanctioned Syrian cross-border aid operations.<sup>45</sup> Convoys are critical in transporting humanitarian supplies at the scale required to support Gaza's displaced populations.

Members of the Committee must explore ways to establish humanitarian aid infrastructure in the region, whether by employing their collective resources or through collaborations with local NGOs. Mobile field hospitals with surgical capabilities could be deployed, as seen in the rapid response tactics of Doctors Without Borders.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> "Humanitarian airdrops: Light at the end of the tunnel - WFP." 14 Jul. 2021,

<https://www.wfp.org/stories/airdrops-humanitarian-emergency-un-world-food-programme-sudan-syria>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2023.

<sup>44</sup> "In Rwanda, Drones Deliver Medical Supplies to Remote Areas - WSJ." 1 Dec. 2017,

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-rwanda-drones-deliver-medical-supplies-to-remote-areas-1512124200>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2023.

<sup>45</sup> "Security Council Rejects Two Draft Resolutions Aimed at Renewing ...." 11 Jul. 2023, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15348.doc.htm>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2023.

<sup>46</sup> "How to Build a Field Hospital | Doctors Without Borders - USA." <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/how-build-field-hospital>. Accessed 3 Dec. 2023.



## Political Navigations

As previously stated, traditionally lengthy procedures will not hinder the paths of action available to the Committee. The Committee will operate as an independent entity separate from any international organization or governing body. Thus, there is no limit to the committee's actions, given that the committee votes to support said actions.

However, each decision will carry consequences. For example, let us say the committee decides to facilitate an emergency supply of medical kits and uses a private logistics company to airlift the supplies into the region, bypassing traditional channels. Israel may increase tensions with other countries or interpret the deliveries as a threat and intercept them. Egypt, in charge of the Rafah border, may interpret the airlifts as undermining their influence and tighten border controls, making future aid more difficult. Key players such as the Fatah may perceive such a decision as supporting Hamas and withdraw collaborations for future initiatives.