Research Report

Model United Nations Oud-Beijerland

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Advancing solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with special focus on the Palestinian right of return

Introduction

The Palestine-Israel conflict is one of modern history's most enduring and complex conflicts, primarily centered around territorial disputes, national identity, and political sovereignty. The core issue is the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, which includes the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. Since Israel's establishment in 1948, the conflict has been marked by cycles of violence, failed peace efforts, and a persistent humanitarian crisis.

The question of Palestine revolves around whether Israel should continue its occupation of Palestinian territories or whether a negotiated settlement could lead to lasting peace based on a two-state solution or other models of peace and reconciliation.

The right of a person to return to his home in his native country traditionally has been included among an individual's fundamental rights. Only in the case of criminals was its denial regarded as a justifiable punishment, exile or banishment being regarded as one of the more severe penalties. Jurists were more concerned with securing the right of a person to leave his country freely, without unjustified interference from his ruler or government. The right of the individual to return home was taken as a corollary to the basic right of freedom of movement once this was established.

General Overview

The conflict dates back to the early 20th century, with competing nationalisms emerging among Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine under British rule. Following the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Palestinian territories were occupied by Israel after the 1967 Six-Day War. Multiple wars,

uprisings, and diplomatic efforts have failed to resolve the dispute, and the situation remains one of the most intractable in international politics.

Key Phases of the Conflict

The conflict has evolved through several phases, with various military and diplomatic efforts, some aimed at ending the occupation and others reinforcing Israeli control.

Period	Key Developments
1947–1948	UN Partition Plan rejected by Arab states; the creation of Israel led to the displacement of Palestinians (Nakba).
1967	Six-Day War resulted in the Israeli occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.
1979	Egypt becomes the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel (Camp David Accords).
1993	Oslo Accords lead to mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).
2000–2005	The second Intifada begins, violence escalates, with both sides suffering significant casualties.
2005	Israel withdraws from Gaza but maintains control over airspace and borders, continuing the blockade.
2022	Israel launches Operation after Hamas attack, Breaking Dawn in Gaza; tensions increase over settler violence and displacement in the West Bank.

2025	Israel–Hamas ceasefire agreement. Relative peace has followed, yet Palestinians have not yet received the full right of return, and both parties have breached the ceasefire on numerous occasion.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

A major advance by the United Nations in establishing international legal norms was in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which links the right of every person to leave and return to this country as inherent elements in the freedom of movement. Article 13 reads:

1. Everyone has a right to freedom of movement and residence without the borders of each State.
2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own and to return to his country.

There is no authoritative Palestinian definition of what constitutes the right of return. Since the expulsions of 1948, the right of return has been taken to mean many things, ranging from the right of all Palestinians or their descendants to return to their former homes and places of origin in Palestine, to a return of some of the Palestinians currently in exile to some limited part of Palestine. But despite the absence of a definition, it is possible to assess the implications of this issue for Palestinians and others, and to explain briefly the development over more than four decades of the concept of return in both Palestinian political thinking and in international forums. In light of current Palestinian thinking on this subject, it is finally possible to explore the concept of the return of the Palestinians in terms of who might return, to where, when, and under what circumstances.

Major Parties Involved

For parties involved, you can choose countries, governmental organisations, NGO's, committees or councils, etc. Write a short text about the party in general and in the case of an organisation or committee, what it does and why it has been established. You should also state clearly in what way the party is involved in this issue.

- Israel: Emphasizes security and sovereignty; opposes a return to pre-1967 borders; supports regional normalization.
- Palestinian Authority: Advocates for full independence, ending the occupation, and the establishment of a Palestinian state.
- Hamas: Seeks the establishment of an Islamic state in all of historical Palestine; opposes Israel's right to exist.
- United States: A strong ally of Israel, supports a negotiated two-state solution but has historically protected Israel in international forums.

- European Union: Supports a two-state solution; calls for an end to settlement expansion and the return to peace talks.
- United Nations: Seeks to uphold international law, including the right of return for Palestinian refugees and an end to Israeli settlements.
- Arab League: Calls for the recognition of a Palestinian state within pre-1967 borders and an end to Israeli occupation.

Possible Solutions

- Diplomatic Efforts: Renew negotiations based on international law and the two-state solution framework. Delegations may renew accords such as, but not limited to, The Camp David Accords of 1978, and the Oslo accords of 1993 en 1995.
- Settlement Freeze: Implementing a freeze on ‘Illegal’ Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as a confidence-building measure.
- Strengthening Human Rights Protection Mechanisms: Ensuring that Palestinian Refugees receive a UN-mandated policy of right of return, through for example, but not limited to:
    - Blue boots on the ground.
    - Sanctioning those which have been persecuted by the ICC
    - Enabling mechanisms for Palestinian refugees to seek refuge internationally
- International Pressure: Sanctioning and persecuting under international law, those that constrain the safe right of return for Palestinian refugees.