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Dear Delegates,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 2014 Montessori Model United Nations Conference.

The following pages intend to guide you in the research of the topics that will be debated at MMUN 2014 in committee sessions. Please note this guide only provides the basis for your investigation. It is your responsibility to find as much information necessary on the topics and how they relate to the country you represent. Such information should help you write your Position Paper, where you need to cite the references in the text and finally list all references in the Modern Language Association (MLA} format.

The more information and understanding you acquire on the two topics, the more you will be able to influence the Resolution writing process through debates [formal and informal caucuses], and the MMUN experience as a whole. Please feel free to contact us if and when you face challenges in your research or formatting your Position Papers.
We encourage you to learn all you can about your topics first and then study your country with regard to the two selected topics. Please remember that both committee members need to be well versed and ready to debate both topics.

Enjoy researching and writing your Position Papers.

We look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

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The Security Council

Under the Charter, the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 Members, and each Member has one vote. Under the Charter, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions.

The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

The Security Council also recommends to the General Assembly the appointment of the Secretary-General and the admission of new Members to the United Nations. And, together with the General Assembly, it elects the judges of the International Court of Justice.

Source: http://www.un.org/en/sc/

Situation in Israel-Palestine

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is older than the United Nations itself. It has a long, controversial history, which is too broad in scope to cover in a single background guide – that is the subject of entire books. The purpose of this guide is not to describe the conflict in its entirety, but to provide a starting point for research by introducing key terms, events, and actors, and to help delegates focus on the key issues underlying the conflict.

Topic Background

Following World War II and the horrors of the Holocaust, in 1947 the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, which called for the creation of two separate Jewish and Arab states. Israel declared itself an independent state in May 1948, and the next day Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq attempted to invade. Israel was able to repel the invasion, taking land that was originally reserved for Arab Palestinians in the process, and creating a large Palestinian refugee crisis.[i]

The founding of Israel would be followed by decades of fighting and terrorism, from the 1948 Arab-Israel War and the 1967 Six-Day War to the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the First and Second Intifadas. As a result of the conflict, thousands of people have died and millions more have suffered, with an entire population becoming refugees.

Attempts were made to end the conflict and bring peace to both sides. In 1993, Israeli and Palestinian leaders met to negotiate a potential peace agreement called the Oslo Accords. Although this would not bring peace, it would kick off years of diplomatic efforts to end the conflict, which is referred to as the peace process.[ii]

Today, the peace process revolves around negotiations between Israeli leaders, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Palestinian leaders, led by President Mahmoud Abbas. Within Israel, however, Netanyahu faces conflicting pressures from his own political party, opposing political parties, and Israeli citizens. Within Palestine, President Abbas is the recognized leader, but another group, Hamas, control a part of Palestine called the Gaza Strip, where they are effectively in control. Although there are two sides to the conflict, within each side there are different actors and internal pressures.

The intense conflict and various internal pressures of both sides means that the peace process requires help from the international community in order to move forward. The United Nations, the European Union, the United States, and Russia have been particularly involved in the peace process, and the four of them are referred to as the "Quartet."[iii] The Arab League is also involved in the peace process.

There are many issues involved in the peace process. Some of the key issues include:

- **Border Disputes:** Resolution 181 originally called for a two-state solution back in 1948, which the international community has also advocated for ever since. But after so many wars, and with Israel occupying Palestine, there is much dispute and controversy over where the borders for both states should be drawn. Additionally, Israelis have settled in the areas that are considered occupied Palestine.[iv]

- **Right of Return:** Following the 1948 war, thousands of Palestinians fled their homes as refugees, and today there are millions of Palestinians living in refugee camps. Refugees claim that they have a right of return that includes "a claim to citizenship, financial settlement and, in some cases, return to former homes and property in what is today Israel."[v] However, the Israeli leadership opposes this right of return in order to keep Israel a Jewish state.

- **Security and Terrorism:** The conflict has created a vicious cycle of fighting by both Israeli and Palestinian sides. The Israeli military occupies parts of Palestine in order to secure its borders and territory taken over the course of the Arab-Israeli wars. However, this also creates tension with Palestinians and leads to insecurity and fighting. Also, groups within Palestine have fired rockets into Israel, and one of Palestine's leading groups, Hamas, is considered a terrorist organization by the United States.[vi]

The Israel-Palestine conflict is intense, controversial, complex, and violent. Although different plans have been tried and failed, negotiations are restarting on both sides.[vii] Now is an important time for the international community to act and help both sides come to an agreement that will lead to peace.

Past Actions

The international community has taken many actions to assist Israel and Palestine find peace. In the UN Security Council, the most recent resolution adopted on the situation was in 2009, Resolution 1860, which "called for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza."[viii] More recently, in September 2012, the President of the Security Council issued a statement describing the latest efforts to restart peace talks.[ix]

With the larger UN family, the UN Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) is responsible for delivering humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees. UNRWA provides education, health, relief and social services to over 5 million Palestinian refugees living in countries across the Middle East, including Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, and areas of Palestine, including the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.[x]

In addition to the UN, numerous NGOs address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, Breaking the Silence is one NGO that comprises "veteran combatants who have served in the Israeli military since the start of the Second Intifada, and have taken it upon themselves to expose the Israeli public to the reality of everyday life in the Occupied Territories."[xi]

Possible Solutions

The Israel-Palestine conflict is broad and complex, and many of the issues that are key to finding peace need to be negotiated directly between Israeli and Palestinian leaders. However, there are several key issues that the United Nations and the Security Council can act on that could impact peace negotiations:

- **Palestine 194:** Palestine is applying to become the 194th member state of the United Nations. Becoming a member state would give the state of Palestine more credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. And it would help Palestinian leaders in negotiations with Israel. However, membership to the UN requires a vote by the Security Council, and historically the US has vetoed Palestine's bid for membership. But can the Security Council find a compromise that would enable Palestine to become a member of the UN?

- **Security Concerns:** Currently, the Israeli military occupies Palestine. From the Israeli point of view, this is to protect its borders, ensure national security, and prevent acts of terrorism. From the Palestinian point of view, this is a violation of Palestine's sovereignty and is seen as a show of force and intimidation. And at the same time, there are groups within Palestine that do not recognize Israel's right to exist, and have committed acts of terror within Israel. Can the Security Council and the international community make efforts to relieve this tense situation and guarantee the security of both Israelis and Palestinians?

- **Human Rights:** Palestinian leaders have accused Israel of violating the human rights of Palestinians, starting with the Israeli occupation of Palestine to Israel's refusal to recognize the right of reply of Palestinian refugees. However, various Palestinian groups have refused to recognize Israel's right to exist. And Israeli leaders believe it is their right to preserve Israel's national security. What is the UN's and the Security Council's view on these issues? Can their opinion affect peace negotiations?

There seems to be opportunity for Israeli and Palestinian leaders to negotiate peace, but the opportunity may not last long. It is imperative for the UN and the international community to act and help both sides find an end to this long and violent conflict.

Further Research

Guiding Questions
- What is your government's position on the Israel-Palestine conflict?
- What is your government's position on Palestine's bid for UN membership?
- What has your government done to assist either Israelis or Palestinians?
- Do Palestinian refugees live in your country?

Research Sources
- Council on Foreign Relations – Crisis Guide: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: http://www.cfr.org/israel/crisis-guide-israeli-palestinian-conflict/p13850
- Security Council Report: UN Documents for Israel/Palestine: http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/israelpalestine/
- Global Policy Forum: Israel, Palestine, and the Occupied Territories: http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/israel-palestine-and-the-occupied-territories.html
- US State Department: Background Briefing on Israeli-Palestinian Peace Talks (July 30, 2013): http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/07/212564.htm
- "United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace": http://bit.ly/10ADdrp

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i http://www.cfr.org/israel/crisis-guide-israeli-palestinian-conflict

ii http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/israel-palestine-and-the-occupied-territories/38362.html

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vi http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/hamas.html

vii http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/08/us-palestinians-israel-usa-idUSBRE9770ZF20130808

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