

Where Olive Branches Weep: The Plight of Health Crisis and Tumult Surrounding the Crisis in Gaza

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Abstract

This paper seeks to understand the worsening health crisis in Gaza, which affects both the people and the healthcare infrastructure, as well as the regional and international responses to this plight. Gaza has become a stage for a humanitarian crisis as a result of Israeli incursions into Palestine. Among the multifaceted crises occurring in Gaza, the healthcare sector has borne the brunt of the impact. The authors employ qualitative research with a descriptive method to examine the problem at hand. The article begins by discussing the health crisis in Gaza, which has worsened following the Israeli attacks after October 7. It highlights the reported assaults on healthcare infrastructure and medical workers that have further strained the existing medical capacity. Considering recent developments, it can be observed that regional states in the Middle East and the international community have not remained idle amid the ongoing crisis in Gaza. Various efforts have been made to address the crisis, involving both state and non-state actors, with aims ranging from calls for boycotts, recognition of Palestine as a state, to the issuance of arrest warrants against Israeli leaders. Overall, this paper concludes that despite the worsening health crisis in Gaza, recent developments indicate active efforts from the international community to alleviate the suffering.

Keywords: Health Crisis, Israel, Gaza, Humanitarian Crisis.

1. Introduction

Hamas launched a rapid and unexpected raid into several Israeli border towns on October 7, 2023, an incursion that triggered a protracted military conflict (Yerushalmy,

2024). The Gaza Strip, already constrained by a decade-long blockade and subjected to constant surveillance by the IDF, now faces an impending ground invasion compounded by an extensive siege and relentless aerial bombardments (UNOCHA, 2025). These sustained military operations have torn apart the fabric of civilian life in Gaza, leaving its urban and rural landscapes devastated and its people deeply traumatized. In many areas, the destruction has been so extensive that observers have described the scenes as "apocalyptic," vividly reflecting the widespread collapse of normalcy and essential infrastructure (News, 2024). The human cost is staggering: Gaza's Health Ministry reported over 52,000 fatalities as of April 2025, with independent estimates suggesting that the true toll may exceed 70,000 when including those still trapped beneath the rubble (UNOCHA, 2025). Nearly 1.9 million residents, approximately 90% of Gaza's pre-war population of 2.3 million have been displaced and are now confined to overcrowded UN shelters and tent encampments. Numerous families have been completely erased from official registries, underscoring the severe demographic collapse induced by the conflict (Relief and Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), n.d.). The physical destruction caused by the conflict is equally profound. Satellite imagery reveals that an estimated 69% of Gaza's residential structures have been either completely demolished or rendered uninhabitable (UNOCHA, 2025). Critical infrastructure has not been spared either; over 92% of the main road networks have been damaged, and nearly 70% of water treatment and sanitation facilities have collapsed under the ongoing bombardments, leaving civilians with severely compromised access to clean water and basic hygiene (WHO, 2025). These infrastructural failures have precipitated widespread outbreaks of disease and exacerbated the malnutrition crisis among a population already debilitated by prolonged conflict and economic isolation (Taha et al., 2024).

Table 1. Palestinian fatalities number following the October 7 attacks

Year	Fatalities
2023	22,185
2024	45,553
2025 (April)	52,418
Source: (UNOCHA, 2025)	

Healthcare services in Gaza have collapsed under the dual pressures of sustained military operations and chronic resource shortages. Numerous hospitals have been reduced to non-functional ruins, if not completely flattened by the conflict with only a fraction of essential healthcare facilities remaining partially operational. The persistent shortages of fuel, medical supplies, and electricity mean that life-saving equipment, such as ventilators and incubators, often operate on borrowed time (Shorrab et al., 2024). This systemic breakdown in healthcare delivery is particularly devastating given the high concentration of vulnerable groups resulting from the prolonged conflict including women, children, and the elderly who face an elevated risk of mortality from conditions that would otherwise be treatable.

The relentless bombardment has produced an environmental and infrastructural catastrophe. The United Nations estimates that nearly 40 million tonnes of rubble now blanket the Gaza Strip, an unprecedented legacy of destruction rarely witnessed in modern conflicts. This immense volume of debris laden with hazardous contaminants such

as asbestos and unexploded ordnance, not only poses immediate public health threats but also severely hinders recovery and reconstruction efforts. Estimates suggest that clearing this debris could take up to 15 years and require approximately \$650 million in resources, further delaying the restoration of essential services such as water, electricity, and health-care. At the same time, the intense bombardments have released vast quantities of toxic particulates and greenhouse gases, with emissions comparable to the annual output of 100,000 to 200,000 passenger vehicles (UNOCHA, 2025). This additional environmental burden has worsened local air quality and contributed to broader climate change dynamics, compounding the long-term humanitarian and ecological crisis in Gaza.

Myriad research efforts have been undertaken to assess Gaza's health sector amid Israel's ongoing aggression. In defining the scope of this study, the authors reviewed several relevant articles addressing the issue. First, (Shorrab et al., 2024) examined how the ongoing war has exacerbated health risks in Gaza. Their study contributes by proposing a new framework for responding to the crisis, which encompasses security and prevention, supply management, and the restoration of the supportive health system. The authors also emphasize the urgency of taking preventive measures before the current crisis extends beyond the region. Next, (Ahmed et al., 2024) focus on the need for international intervention in addressing Gaza's multifaceted health crisis. In assessing the ongoing catastrophe, the study underscores the responsibility of the academic community to generate relevant knowledge and inquiries regarding the crisis, while simultaneously advocating for peace. Moreover, the study stresses the heightened responsibility of the United Nations, which plays a crucial role in coordinating humanitarian aid delivery to Gaza and ensuring adherence to human rights by all parties involved. Taken together, these two studies provide valuable insights into the condition of Gaza's health sector as it stood in 2024.

Against this backdrop, the article aims to provide an updated examination of Gaza's health and humanitarian crisis by incorporating recent developments and the actions, both undertaken and potential by state and non-state actors to address the problem. In doing so, the study contributes to the academic discourse by addressing existing research gaps, particularly concerning recent developments in the crisis, with a focus on the health dimension, regional responses, and the role of the international community. With these considerations in mind, the article seeks to enhance understanding of the deteriorating health crisis in Gaza and how its escalation has prompted responses from regional states and the broader international community.

2. Methods

In building a comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand, the authors employ a qualitative research approach. Specifically, a descriptive research method is utilized to interpret and analyze the relevant data collected. Through this method, the study seeks to capture the ongoing healthcare crisis in Gaza and the responses of the international community, both within and beyond the Middle Eastern region. Furthermore, the article relies on secondary data obtained from previous studies, news coverage, and relevant institutional reports. The authors adopt an internet-based data collection technique to gather the necessary information. This technique enables access to a wide range of sources and datasets available online. In selecting the data, the authors focus on materials related to the broader context of the Gaza crisis, international responses to the humanitarian situation,

and the health challenges unfolding within the region. Moreover, the use of internet-based data collection provides the researchers with the flexibility to triangulate information as a safeguard against inaccuracies. This is accomplished by cross-verifying one source with another, a process made feasible by the vast amount of information accessible through digital platforms.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Health Under Siege: The War's Impact on Bodies, Minds, and Systems

Since October 7, 2023, Israeli military operations have resulted in the deaths of more than 50,810 Palestinians as of April 8, 2025. According to available data, approximately 70% of the victims were children. It is also imperative to acknowledge the suffering of thousands of pregnant women and other women who have fallen victim to the ongoing violence. The under-five mortality rate has reached 11.8 per 1,000 live births, with 6.21 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births. These operations have gone beyond the stated objective of targeting Hamas as an adversary. While the formation of Hamas can, to some extent, be understood as a consequence of the Israeli occupation, the deliberate targeting of Palestinian civilians remains a matter of grave humanitarian concern (UN-OCHA, 2025).

Even before October 7, 2023, Gaza's health services were already in a state of severe deterioration. Palestinians have long faced numerous barriers and restrictions in accessing medical care due to policies imposed by the Israeli occupying authorities. According to (WHO, 2025), there were more than 800 attacks on health services, including 443 incidents in Gaza and 447 in the West Bank. These attacks resulted in the deaths of 480 health workers and injuries to 160 others. The Israeli assaults encompassed a wide range of violations, including physical attacks, arrests, and detentions, which targeted not only medical personnel but also patients. Such acts reflect a flagrant disregard for human life and violate the fundamental principles of medical neutrality and ethics in armed conflict. Consequently, this ongoing violence has precipitated the near-total collapse of the Palestinian health system, with most hospitals severely damaged and operating at only minimal capacity.

According to the World Health Organization (*ibid.*), 654 attacks on healthcare facilities in Gaza have been documented since October 2023, resulting in 886 deaths and 1,349 injuries. The situation for healthcare personnel is equally alarming: as of May 2025, approximately 1,400 healthcare and aid workers have been killed in Gaza (Palestinians, 2025). In December 2023, Dr. Abu Saada, head of the surgical department at Al-Shifa Hospital, reported that Israeli aircraft continued to bomb multiple hospital buildings and departments for several consecutive days. Armed drones were also used to target individuals, including patients and displaced civilians, resulting in numerous fatalities within the hospital compound. These attacks reflect a systematic disregard for the distinction between military targets and civilian or protected areas, including hospitals. Among the most heavily affected medical facilities are the Kamal Adwan Hospital, the European Gaza Hospital, the Hamad Hospital for Rehabilitation and Prosthetics, and the Indonesian Hospital (WHO, 2025).

The Kamal Adwan Hospital was forced to cease operations in December 2024 following sustained Israeli attacks. As of 2024, only 12 out of 36 hospitals in Gaza

were still partially functional, operating far below capacity due to severe shortages of resources and equipment. This functional collapse poses potentially fatal consequences for approximately 2,000 cancer patients who depend on Gaza's oncology centers for continuous treatment. Before the escalation of attacks, Gaza City hospitals including Al-Shifa, Al-Nasr, and Kamal Adwan collectively maintained over 100 incubators. At present, however, only seven or eight remain operational. This shortage coincides with a sharp increase in premature births requiring neonatal intensive care (NICU), primarily due to malnutrition and restricted access to maternal healthcare. Similar pressure has also afflicted the Indonesian Hospital, which has endured repeated attacks since 2023. Most recently, an airstrike targeted its power generators, triggering a fire that further disrupted hospital operations (Sio, 2025). Beyond the hospital compound, Dr. Marwan Sultan, the hospital's director, was killed along with his family in an airstrike (Moench, 2025).

It should be noted that severe resource shortages have also been reported across hospitals in Gaza. Power outages and fuel blockades have forced many facilities to rely on generators running dangerously low on fuel. Conditions on the ground are further aggravated by the lack of logistical and transportation support, as bombing and tank incursions have destroyed critical road networks. Consequently, medical personnel are often compelled to provide care under extremely challenging circumstances, including performing surgical procedures without adequate lighting or anesthesia (Borders, 2025). The closure of maternity hospitals, such as Al-Hilo Hospital, has resulted in a surge of child-births without access to essential medical supplies. In Rafah, an estimated 5,500 pregnant women expected to give birth within the next month are unable to obtain adequate maternal healthcare services (UNFPA, 2023).

In June 2024, Guillemette Thomas, Doctors Without Borders / Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)'s medical coordinator in Palestine, reported that the organization's medical supplies were rapidly dwindling due to restricted access to Gaza imposed by Israeli authorities. Thomas warned that, *"If adequate medical supplies are not successfully delivered to Gaza soon, it may become necessary to suspend our medical activities a prospect that is difficult to imagine given the urgent medical needs of thousands of people in Gaza."* She further explained that attending physicians face severe shortages of pain relief medication, leaving them unable to treat victims suffering from extensive burns and fractures. Thomas also highlighted the logistical barriers obstructing humanitarian operations, noting: *"We have six trucks filled with 37 tons of supplies the vast majority of which are essential medical items that have been waiting since June 14 on the Egyptian side of the Kerem Shalom crossing point, unable to cross into Gaza where they are needed to save lives."* (Frontières, 2025).

The collapse of health services in Palestine is multifaceted, with infrastructure damage and logistical barriers constituting only part of the crisis. Another major contributing factor is the critical shortage of medical personnel resulting from Israeli attacks on healthcare workers. According to Fadel Naim, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the Islamic University, many of his colleagues have been killed, and medical staff in Gaza "hear every day that others have died." For healthcare professionals, wearing scrubs and white coats now symbolizes vulnerability rather than safety, as described by Dr. Tanya Haj-Hassan from Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP). Since October 2023, more than 1,000 healthcare workers have been killed while performing their duties (Palestinians, 2025). The escalating levels of violence are particularly concerning, with reports indi-

cating that Israeli troops have used medical personnel as human shields within hospital facilities, a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. This practice appears to represent a deliberate military tactic aimed at minimizing armed resistance and suppressing opposition (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, the targeting of medical personnel by Israeli military forces has also been documented beyond the immediate premises of healthcare facilities. In late March 2025, a video circulated on social media depicted an incident in which a medical professional was deliberately shot by Israeli forces while inside an ambulance. According to forensic analyst Ahmad Dhaher, who examined five of the bodies at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, the forensic evidence indicated close-range gunfire. Dhaher observed that “one person was shot in the head, another in the heart, and a third sustained six or seven bullets to the torso” (Jazeera, 2025).

The escalating number of casualties is also reflected in the hospital bed occupancy rates, which have surged to 150% of total capacity across Gaza. This severe overcrowding has complicated efforts to implement infection prevention and control measures. The disruption of vaccination services, coupled with the collapse of water and sanitation infrastructure, has further exacerbated public health risks, resulting in widespread outbreaks of infectious diseases. Current data indicate approximately 71,000 reported cases, including 8,944 cases of scabies and lice, 1,005 cases of chickenpox, and 54,866 cases of upper respiratory infections. Moreover, the United Nations (UN) has reported a sharp increase in acute malnutrition among children under five, with one in ten children affected (Mohammed, Elgailani, Ibrahim Ali, et al., 2024). This situation signifies a deeply concerning rise in Gaza’s malnutrition burden, intensifying the already critical health crisis. Healthcare professionals continue to operate under extreme stress and hardship, often without adequate resources or rest.

In addition to the immense physical toll, the mental health of the Palestinian population has been profoundly compromised by the ongoing conflict. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2025), 44.7% of Palestinian men and 50.2% of women experience psychological distress, with even higher rates reported in the Gaza Strip, where 59.1% of men and 57.9% of women exhibit symptoms of emotional suffering. Mental illness has consequently become a prevalent and chronic condition among Palestinians. A sociodemographic study further revealed a strong negative correlation between quality of life and mental health indicators, specifically stress, anxiety, and depression. The deterioration in quality of life, shaped by the instability of military occupation, is closely linked to heightened psychological distress. These conditions are mutually reinforcing, as stress is positively correlated with both anxiety and depression, and anxiety similarly exacerbates depressive symptoms. The harsh realities of occupation including poverty, unemployment, economic dependence, and persistent insecurity have deeply eroded psychological resilience. Such human insecurity has been directly associated with severe depression, suicidal ideation, and psychological instability among Palestinian adults (Bdier, Veronese, and Mahamid, 2023).

Importantly, this mental health crisis does not affect adults alone. The impact on children has been catastrophic, with UNICEF reporting that over one million children are now in need of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). In July 2024, UNICEF emphasized that nearly all of Gaza’s 1.2 million children require such care. Supporting this, the Palestinian Psychological Conditions Survey (PPCS, 2022) found that approx-

imately 70% of Gazans tested positive for depression, underscoring the magnitude of the crisis. This urgent mental health emergency poses a major challenge not only for the Palestinian people but also for the international community, particularly in relation to vulnerable groups such as children, women (including pregnant women), the elderly, and persons with disabilities. These populations face compounded psychological harm and are in dire need of sustained mental health support amid the broader humanitarian catastrophe (Zughbur et al., 2025).

Data from the International Labour Organization (Organization, 2024) indicate that the unemployment rate in Gaza rose to 80% by June 2024 (Rose and Sayed, 2024). As a result, families and communities have been forced to prioritize basic survival over addressing psychosocial and mental health needs. Under such pressures, children are increasingly involved in meeting daily subsistence demands. Boys are often sent to work to help their families survive, while girls tend to be confined to tents, and others have been reported begging on the streets. The loss of access to education has further intensified the urgency of providing psychosocial support. According to Save the Children (2022), *“The presence of caregivers and other social and emotional support is a key psychosocial protective factor for children.”*

Beyond children, women also face equally severe challenges. Addressing their psychosocial and emotional needs is intricately linked to issues of gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, personal hygiene, and their significant responsibilities in childcare and education. Older adults and persons with disabilities are likewise highly vulnerable. Comprising approximately 5% of Gaza’s total population, older individuals have been reported to experience heightened anxiety and depression and require sustained access to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) (ACAPS, 2024). Since October 7, 2023, people with physical and mental disabilities have lost access to essential healthcare services, resulting in increased stress, anxiety, and other psychosocial disorders. According to (Frontières, 2025), *“Effective access to psychosocial support requires security first. But in reality, there is currently no safe place in Gaza.”*

3.2. Regional Reactions to The Ongoing Conflict

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi proposed a Gaza reconstruction plan as an alternative to former U.S. President Donald Trump’s proposed Gaza takeover plan. Together with Jordan, Egypt rejected the United States’ proposal to relocate Gazans and establish its so-called “Middle East Riviera” project. In response, the United States indicated its willingness to consider Arab initiatives for post-war reconstruction in Gaza. Under Egypt’s proposal, el-Sisi emphasized that Palestinians in Gaza would not be displaced from their territory, while asserting that the plan could still advance peace efforts amid the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The proposal subsequently received endorsement from Arab League leaders, including Qatar (Jazeera, 2025).

According to (ibid.), Egypt’s Gaza Reconstruction Plan is structured into three main phases. The first phase, termed interim measures, focuses on debris removal particularly along Salah al-Din Street followed by the restoration of approximately 60,000 damaged buildings and the construction of 200,000 temporary housing units to accommodate around 1.2 million displaced residents. This stage is expected to last six months and will be administered by the Palestinian Authority. The second phase, referred to as reconstruction, involves large-scale efforts to rebuild 400,000 permanent homes and re-

store critical public infrastructure, including water, sanitation, telecommunications, and electricity networks. Additionally, this phase envisions the development of an industrial zone, a fishing port, a commercial port, and an airport, with the entire reconstruction process projected to be completed within 30 months. The final phase, governance, aims to establish effective administrative mechanisms for overseeing humanitarian assistance and governance functions. It includes technical and logistical support from the Steering and Management Council and outlines the preparation for democratic elections once security and political conditions permit.

Jordan, a close neighbor to both Israel and the West Bank, has consistently expressed its firm opposition to any proposals involving the forced relocation or displacement of Gaza residents. The Jordanian government regards such measures as a direct threat to regional stability and a violation of international humanitarian law, particularly those provisions designed to safeguard the rights and dignity of displaced populations. Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi has reaffirmed the country's unwavering stance, emphasizing that the only viable path toward lasting peace in the region lies in the implementation of the two-state solution. "We will work for a just peace, which cannot take place without the implementation of the two-state solution that guarantees the rights of the Palestinian people, especially their right to freedom and to an independent sovereign state on their Palestinian homeland," Safadi stated (Aljazeera, 2025). Jordan's position reflects the broader consensus among Arab nations regarding the potential consequences of permanent displacement, which could further inflame tensions, undermine the prospects for future negotiations, and set a dangerous precedent in international conflict resolution. The emphasis on the two-state solution also underscores Jordan's long-standing support for Palestinian self-determination, while highlighting the critical need for a political resolution that respects historical claims, international law, and the dignity of the Palestinian people.

The response from neighboring countries appears to align, to some extent, with the principle of expulsion advocated by Israel and its allies. The reconstruction proposal advanced by neighboring states and endorsed by Arab nations ostensibly offers a promising pathway toward resolving the ongoing conflict. However, the relocation of the indigenous Palestinian population could lead to their displacement and the potential inability to return to their homes after reconstruction efforts are completed. This scenario raises serious legal and ethical concerns, as the forced displacement of civilian populations violates core principles of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, which explicitly prohibits the forcible transfer or deportation of protected persons from occupied territories (Red Cross, 1949). Furthermore, the right of refugees to return to their homes is enshrined in key international instruments such as UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (Relief and Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), n.d.). Any reconstruction initiative that implicitly or explicitly facilitates permanent demographic change without ensuring the right of return may constitute a breach of international humanitarian and human rights law, and could amount to a form of ethnic cleansing. Therefore, while reconstruction is both necessary and urgent, it must not come at the expense of erasing the rights, identity, and historical continuity of the Palestinian people.

The strategic alignment of these neighboring countries is undoubtedly influenced by their subordination to occupying powers and the long-standing process of Arab-Israeli normalization. The historical roots of this normalization trace back to the 1978 Camp

David Accords between Egypt and Israel, which led Egypt to formally recognize Israel in exchange for the withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the Sinai Peninsula. This was followed by the 1994 Oslo Accords, which further encouraged engagement between Arab nations and Israel, and later by the 2020 Abraham Accords, which significantly deepened diplomatic and economic ties. Saudi Arabia, in particular, has sought to strengthen cooperation among its regional allies to advance the goals articulated in Saudi Vision 2030. Within this framework, the United States as Israel's principal supporter and global superpower plays a central role in sustaining and facilitating this normalization process. Saudi Arabia's increasingly pragmatic stance toward Israel is exemplified by its decision to open its airspace to Israeli aircraft, marking a symbolic yet significant gesture of rapprochement.

3.3. International Responses to the Crisis

The international response to Israel's ongoing military operations in Gaza has intensified, characterized by a combination of legal actions, diplomatic recalibrations, shifts in state recognition, and the emergence of grassroots movements aimed at pressuring Israel to return to the negotiating table.

3.3.1. ICC Arrest Warrants for Israeli Leaders

In May 2024, the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Court, 2024) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, accusing them of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. These allegations include the deliberate deprivation of essential resources such as food, water, fuel, and medical care to civilians between October 2023 and May 2024. The ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber I determined that there were reasonable grounds to believe these actions had a devastating impact on Gaza's hospitals and public health infrastructure. Furthermore, warrants were also issued for far-right ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir in connection with the illegal expansion of settlements in the West Bank, which the Court considered potential violations of the Geneva Conventions (*ibid.*).

Israel dismissed the ICC's actions, with Prime Minister Netanyahu describing the accusations as absurd and politically motivated. The Israeli Foreign Ministry asserted that the Court had lost its credibility. The international response was divided: France expressed support for the ICC's autonomy without explicitly endorsing the warrants, while the United States objected to equating Israel with Hamas. Norway and Sweden endorsed the ICC's legal proceedings, whereas Argentina's president denounced the warrants. Legal analysts noted that although actual arrests are unlikely without international cooperation, the warrants exert significant diplomatic and reputational pressure on Israeli leaders, complicating their travel and foreign relations. They also signal a growing consensus within parts of the international community on the need for accountability in cases of state-sponsored violence.

3.3.2. European Union's Reaction

The European Union's stance has become increasingly critical of Israel. Germany, historically a strong ally, has expressed concern over Israel's military strategies. Chan-

cellor Friedrich Merz and Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul indicated that future arms supplies would depend on humanitarian developments in Gaza (Lunday, 2025). France warned that it could impose sanctions if access to aid continued to be restricted. The EU has begun reassessing its trade relations with Israel, potentially suspending the EU–Israel Association Agreement. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom has independently suspended trade negotiations with Israel.

Despite these developments, EU unity remains fractured on the issue. While countries such as the Netherlands advocate for a firmer stance, others including Hungary, Italy, and the Czech Republic continue to offer unwavering support for Israel, complicating efforts to implement bloc-wide measures. Nevertheless, several members of the European Parliament have called for an arms embargo and independent investigations into potential violations of international law. The EU’s External Action Service has also reiterated the necessity of a two-state solution, signaling a shift from passive diplomacy toward conditional engagement. Meanwhile, public pressure within the EU has grown increasingly intense, with large-scale demonstrations and human rights campaigns urging governments to reconsider both bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Israel, particularly in the areas of arms sales, academic exchange, and technological collaboration.

3.3.3. Recent Recognitions of Palestinian Statehood

Amid escalating humanitarian concerns, several countries have moved to formally recognize the State of Palestine. In May 2024, Spain, Ireland, and Norway jointly announced their recognition, framing it as a necessary step toward advancing peace and stability. Slovenia followed suit in June 2024, signaling a broader European shift and a change in paradigm. These nations joined earlier recognizers during the ongoing conflict, including Armenia and Jamaica. Mexico, which had elevated Palestine’s diplomatic mission to an embassy in 2023, reaffirmed its recognition in 2025 under President Claudia Sheinbaum. Furthermore, both France and the United Kingdom have announced plans to recognize Palestine as of July 2025, with the formal declaration expected to take place in September before the United Nations General Assembly (Neuman, 2025).

Table 2. European states that recognize or will recognize following the October 7 attacks
Source: Writers

State	Time of Palestine Recognition
Spain	May 2024
Ireland	May 2024
Norway	May 2024
Slovenia	June 2024
France	September 2025
United Kingdom	September 2025

This wave of recognition represents not merely a symbolic gesture but a deliberate diplomatic maneuver intended to pressure Israel and encourage multilateral engagement in resolving the conflict. The coordinated nature of these announcements, particularly within the EU, underscores growing dissatisfaction with Israel’s compliance with international norms and an increasing willingness to bypass U.S.-led frameworks in favor

of more assertive European initiatives, given the protracted nature of the conflict. These recognitions also reflect mounting domestic political pressures within these states, as civil society groups and parliamentary opposition have vocally demanded greater alignment with international humanitarian law. Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has notably argued that recognition is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic step to address asymmetries in negotiations. Meanwhile, Ireland has highlighted historical parallels with its own struggle for sovereignty, a stance that resonates deeply with its domestic electorate.

The diplomatic consequences are significant. Palestinian participation in global forums is gradually gaining legitimacy, while Israel faces growing isolation among Western democracies, a trend that could deepen into full diplomatic marginalization. Furthermore, these recognitions have triggered debates in other EU member states about reassessing their positions, generating a ripple effect that challenges long-standing policy norms. Analysts suggest that if similar recognitions continue, a turning point may emerge in which Palestinian statehood is perceived not as a future aspiration but as an existing geopolitical reality, compelling both Israel and its allies to recalibrate their strategic approaches.

3.3.4. The call for jihad from Muslim scholars

Instead of supporting Gaza's reconstruction, the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), an organization previously led by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, recently issued a fatwa calling for jihad. Ali al-Qaradhagi, the IUMS secretary-general, urged all Muslims and Muslim-majority countries to immediately wage jihad against the "Zionist entity" and anyone who cooperates with it in this regard, including mercenaries or soldiers from any country. The IUMS's 15-point decree states that military intervention, supplying the mujahideen with weapons, expertise, and intelligence is a binding duty for Palestinians, neighboring countries (Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon), and all Arab and other Muslim countries. It further asserts that Muslim governments have a duty to intervene militarily, economically, and politically to stop the genocide and the destruction in Gaza (Muslim Scholars, 2025).

Furthermore, the IUMS's decree addressed several other key points, including a prohibition on supplying logistics, military support, weapons, or any aid used to carry out genocide; a call for scientists to convey the truth; encouragement to continue boycotting companies aligned with the "Zionist" side; and an affirmation that Muslim unity is a religious duty.

3.3.5. BDS Movement

Meanwhile, resistance also comes from the BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions), a Palestinian-led initiative aimed at achieving freedom, justice, and equality in response to Israel's actions. BDS can be considered a grassroots activist movement designed to promote the Palestinian cause globally on an individual level. According to its official website, BDS was founded and spearheaded by Palestinian civil society. The movement was launched in 2005 by a coalition of 170 Palestinian trade unions, refugee networks, women's organizations, professional associations, popular resistance committees, and other civilians. Its principle is to focus boycotts on a small number of products or

companies to achieve maximum impact without violence. The BDS movement has three major goals that it has targeted since its inception. First, to end all forms of occupation and colonization of Arab lands and to dismantle the Wall, in accordance with international law that condemns the occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the Syrian Golan Heights, as Israeli-occupied territory. Second, to recognize the human rights of Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel in a comprehensive and equal manner. Third, to respect, protect, and promote the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their land, as stipulated in UN Resolution 194 (BDS, 2024).

Globally, public responses to BDS are varied, depending on the perspective and context of each region. Positive support comes from many parties, including individuals, groups, educational institutions, community organizations, and companies. Many of them participate in BDS campaign strategies by boycotting products from companies affiliated with Israel and its supporters of the occupation in Palestine. Some people, especially ordinary citizens consider BDS an effective means of supporting the liberation of Palestine from Israeli occupation. They describe it as a solidarity movement that unites them in a single voice and purpose, reflecting a sense of empathy for fellow human beings. In Indonesia, support for boycotts has been found to be more dominant than opposition, especially after the MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) issued Fatwa No. 83 of 2023 concerning the Law of Support for Palestine, which addresses boycott activities as well as social sanctions against Israel. Public opinion and responses vary, but overall, the general public tends to support the BDS movement's strategy.

Some movements affiliated with the BDS campaign, such as Palestine Action, have taken direct action by targeting companies linked to the Israeli military-industrial complex. These acts of civil disobedience include occupations, blockades, and sabotage of facilities involved in the production or supply of equipment used by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). In several cases, their interventions have been so disruptive that factories were forced to halt operations temporarily due to significant technical and operational damage. Such tactics aim not only to interrupt the supply chain supporting Israel's military actions but also to draw international attention to corporate complicity in the conflict and to pressure governments and institutions to reconsider their defense contracts with firms supplying the IDF. These efforts reflect a growing trend of grassroots activism that views economic and industrial disruption as a form of resistance to what activists perceive as systemic injustice and occupation.

In terms of international legality, the position of BDS is complex and involves several perspectives. According to its campaign strategy, the BDS movement aligns with the principles of freedom of expression, opinion, and solidarity, which are recognized globally and adhered to by billions of people. BDS also receives support from several governments and NGOs in pursuing its objectives. Conversely, some countries, based on their national legal frameworks have expressed opposition to the BDS movement. Germany, the UK, Israel, France, and several states in the US have even introduced anti-BDS legislation. BDS is also sometimes associated with anti-Semitism. However, this does not mean that BDS is illegal, as such policies operate at the national level. Internationally, the legality of the BDS movement is recognized and not prohibited.

In its 20 years of existence, BDS has made a significant impact with its campaigns. In their report *Indicators of the BDS Movement's Global Impact: July–December 2024*, BDS outlines the results and influence of its campaigns, ranging from policies affect-

ing organizations, governments, the financial sector, and companies, to institutions and political parties. Some examples are as follows. In November 2024, the Colombian government issued a policy to cut off all forms of diplomatic, military, and trade relations with Israel, including replacing military aircraft originally supplied by Israeli Aerospace Industries. Canada also canceled approximately 30 arms export licenses to Israel. Puma, the international German shoe and sporting goods company, decided not to renew its contract with the Israeli soccer association following a massive Puma boycott campaign. In the academic world, MIT's Graduate Student Council supported a resolution calling for MIT to immediately end all research funding sponsored by the Israeli military. Similarly, 56 student organizations at Yale supported the divestment of the university's \$41 billion endowment from Israeli arms manufacturers. These are just a few of the BDS impacts; of course, many more can be found in the reports published to date.

3.3.6. The Gaza Conflict: A Regional Security Flashpoint

"It's not a war — Gaza is being wiped off the map," said the 62-year-old resident of Tamesna, speaking to AP. The humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza and Palestine as a whole represents a poignant and multifaceted security issue for the region. Some of the security dimensions that have been jeopardized include, but are not limited to, health security, food security, human security, and more. This situation has attracted the sympathy and attention of people across the globe, especially those in the Middle East. The persistent nature of the conflict, along with its concomitant suffering and humanitarian consequences, highlights the shortcomings of the international community and institutions in ending the conflict that began in 2023. In the case of the UN, the conflict has become the biggest stress test as it seeks to build peace between Israel and Palestine (News, 2024). Failure to resolve the conflict and its myriad security issues could erode trust in international institutions.

In addition, it is important to consider the issue and its implications at a regional level, encompassing numerous states in the Middle East. The Israel-Palestine conflict also intersects with other conflicts, such as attacks carried out by the Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon (Yerushalmy, 2024). Therefore, every state in the region has a stake in the conflict, as it can negatively affect regional security and stability, not to mention the many other repercussions across various sectors.

To this end, both state and non-state actors can contribute to supporting the people of Palestine amidst their plight. For states, initiatives can be undertaken unilaterally or multilaterally to manage the violence or resolve the conflict. In this regard, some states, such as Egypt and Qatar, have been involved in bridging Hamas and Israel by offering ceasefire proposals. Awareness of the Palestinians' plight and the conflict's far-reaching repercussions should make it clear to regional states that silence is not an option.

This course of action is not exclusive to those residing in the region; rather, it can also be undertaken by states across the globe. Globalization has brought the world to a higher degree of interconnectedness through technological advances across numerous fields. As a result, states beyond the Middle East can remain aware of and informed about the turmoil in Palestine. For example, Indonesia, a state in Southeast Asia, has been one of the active actors advocating for the end of the Israel-Palestine conflict in numerous international fora, from UNGA deliberations to the recent ICJ hearing (Romdoni, 2025). Additionally, globalization paves the way for stronger non-state actors in the international

system, as seen in the roles of NGOs and individuals alike. Regarding NGOs, their contributions can take the form of advocacy and action, platforms for deliberation, and aid delivery. These functions can serve as considerations for NGOs worldwide in formulating strategies to address myriad issues, including the crisis in Gaza. They can also leverage the internet to disseminate knowledge, provide updates on the crisis (knowledge-building initiatives), and mobilize action, given how the internet connects people globally in a virtual space.

Individually, people can also contribute in their personal capacity. This may include participating in the BDS movement, raising awareness and advocating for supportive initiatives in their communities, avoiding the spread of misinformation, and more. Moreover, individuals can support the efforts of civil society in their respective countries. Despite their limited capacity as non-state actors, they can nonetheless contribute in various ways. For example, Muhammadiyah in Indonesia has played a significant role in advocating and campaigning for a peaceful resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict at multiple levels, including within its internal organization, nationally, and internationally (Mahdi, 2024). This demonstrates that advocacy and campaigning for conflict resolution, as well as addressing the humanitarian crisis in Palestine, can be undertaken by anyone.

4. Conclusions

The ongoing conflict in Gaza has resulted in a devastating humanitarian crisis with far-reaching and long-term consequences. Severe damage to infrastructure, healthcare systems, and basic services will take years to rebuild, while widespread trauma and mental health impacts, particularly on children and other vulnerable groups, will have lasting effects. Economic devastation and high unemployment, coupled with environmental damage and contamination, further compound the challenges faced by the population. Disruption of education for an entire generation threatens future prospects, and the potential for further regional destabilization remains significant. To address these issues, continued advocacy for an immediate ceasefire and peaceful resolution is crucial, alongside support for reconstruction efforts and humanitarian aid delivery. Urgent medical and mental health needs must be addressed, while promoting accountability for violations of international law. Supporting civil society and grassroots peace-building initiatives, working towards a just and lasting political solution that respects Palestinian rights, and maintaining international attention on the crisis and its impacts are essential steps. Ultimately, resolving this conflict and addressing its consequences will require sustained engagement from the international community, regional actors, and civil society, using a comprehensive approach that considers humanitarian, political, and human rights dimensions.

Future research endeavors can further enrich the field by taking into account ongoing developments in the conflict and the humanitarian crisis. Another approach to explore is the application of alternative theoretical frameworks, such as the securitization framework and systems thinking approach, to gain different perspectives on the issue. In addition, relevant topics can be considered, including connections with other non-traditional security fields, such as food security, community security, human security, and a regional security overview amidst the turmoil. Through these measures, a more refined understanding of the problem can be attained.

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