

## PALESTINE: THE STORY OF UNPARALLELED RESISTANCE

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*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



**Palestine continues to face Israeli aggression since 1948. However, the Palestinian people's unparalleled resistance remains matchless in the face of growing Israeli brutality. Every year, new levels of Israeli violence against innocent Palestinians are set and the current year, 2023 is no exception, with more than ninety Palestinians having been killed. Religious occasions such as the holy month of Ramadan is also no exception, and at this time, every year, the Israeli control of Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque comes in the limelight, as it is often accompanied by surging violence against hapless Palestinians. The asymmetric warfare continues, with advanced weaponry on one side and sticks and stones on the other.**

On 5 April, 2023, Israeli police carried out a ruthless attack on worshipers in the Qibli Mosque, in the Al-Aqsa compound, which resulted in heavy casualties. Tear gas, bullets and other means of aggression were used by the Israeli police, who alleged the presence of dissenters in the compound. Over four hundred Palestinians were also arrested and remain in Israeli custody.<sup>1</sup>

The Al Aqsa incident is a stark reminder of the brutalities Israel has been carrying out against the Palestinians, which has been synonymous with ethnic cleansing and apartheid. Under this, Israel has subjected them to oppression and discrimination which includes blockades, segregation and restricted movement. This has been in large part the strategy of Israel to eliminate Palestinian

<sup>1</sup> What's behind the Ramadan raids at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque? Al Jazeera, April 5, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/5/al-aqsa-mosque-compound-and-recurrent-ramadan-tensions>

identity at all costs. Violence, in this case, is only one part of the strategy. It may be noted that the unlawful action by the Israeli forces is also a violation of the Status Quo Agreement, which Israel is bound to respect. The culture of impunity reigns supreme, with Israel resorting to similar violence in previous years, particularly in the holy month of Ramadan. The shrinking space for Palestinians, with increasing restrictions, has no parallel in the world, although Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir is also an example of similar subjugation.

Forced evictions and demolition of Palestinian homes has become the norm and this tendency has seen an upward trend with the Israeli government's persistent appetite for usurping Palestinian rights. In March this year, a decision to repeal a 2005 law ordering the evacuation of four predominantly sensitive West Bank settlements, have also inflamed tensions between the Palestinians and Israeli settlers. Since the beginning of 2023, twenty two hundred Palestinians have been detained by Israeli forces and kept in prisons.<sup>2</sup> Currently there are more than 7 million Palestinian refugees<sup>3</sup>, who mostly reside in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

While addressing a United Nations Security Council meeting, Mr. Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, voiced concern over the dangerous cycle of violence that has been witnessed so far in recent months.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory also condemned the 'Israeli authorities used blatantly excessive and unjustified force against Palestinian Muslims'<sup>6</sup>

Pakistan has strongly condemned the recent spate of violence against the Palestinians, while reiterating its firm and unwavering support for the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause. Pakistan has time and again renewed its call for a viable, independent Palestinian State, with pre-1967 borders, and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital as being the only fair, comprehensive and lasting solution of the Palestinian question, in accordance with the relevant United Nations and OIC resolutions. Pakistan remains steadfast in its support for the Palestinian cause and this sentiment is largely reflected in the Pakistani public as well.

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<sup>2</sup> Qais Abu Samra, 2,200 Palestinians detained by Israel this year: NGO, Anadolu News, April 5, 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/2-200-palestinians-detained-by-israel-this-year-ngo/2864645>

<sup>3</sup> Refugees International, <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/palestine>

<sup>4</sup> UNRWA, Palestine Refugees, <https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>

<sup>5</sup> With 2022 Deadliest Year in Israel-Palestine Conflict, Reversing Violent Trends Must Be International Priority, Middle East Coordinator Tells Security Council, January 18, 2023, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15179.doc.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Israel: UN expert condemns brutal attacks on Palestinians at Al-Aqsa Mosque, April 6, 2023, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/04/israel-un-expert-condemns-brutal-attacks-palestinians-al-aqsa->

The international community has also widely condemned Israeli aggression, which includes the United Nations, the Arab League, United States, Turkiye, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Jordan, among several others. The Arab League held an emergency meeting on April 5, 2023 after the attack, condemning Israeli aggression and calling on the UN Security Council to intervene to halt Israeli atrocities. Similarly, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) Executive Committee also held an emergency meeting on April 8, 2023, and condemned the brutal attack.

Despite international condemnations, lack of accountability has emboldened the Israeli government's naked aggression to carry out increasing atrocities against the Palestinian people in a larger attempt to eliminate their claim to a homeland. The global community must not lose sight of the ultimate goal, which is to end the Israeli occupation, resolve the conflict through a two-State solution, and ultimately give the Palestinian their fundamental rights. The continuous lack of a meaningful peace process, coupled with hypocritical silence, best describes why peace is a forgotten word for Palestine.