



Faculty of Legal Sciences

School of International Studies

**THE RIGHT TO VETO IN THE SECURITY
COUNCIL: ITS IMPACT ON THE
HUMANITARIAN CRISIS OF THE
PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT IN 2023**

**Project prior to obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in
International Studies**

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THE RIGHT TO VETO IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL: ITS IMPACT ON THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS OF THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT IN 2023

ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the impact of the veto power exercised by the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council on resolutions aimed at mitigating the humanitarian crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2023. Through a qualitative approach, the study examined the resolutions blocked by the permanent members, with an emphasis on the resulting humanitarian consequences. The study showed how the use of the veto has hindered international efforts aimed at reducing the humanitarian impact in the occupied Palestinian territories, resulting in a humanitarian crisis characterized by population displacement, the destruction of civilian infrastructure, and the collapse of essential services. It concluded that, despite the majority support of the Security Council members, the veto has obstructed international action, prolonging the suffering of the population and weakening the credibility of the Security Council in its ability to fulfill its role of maintaining international peace and security.

Keywords

Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza, International Humanitarian Law, Israeli – Palestinian International Conflict, Right to Veto, Security Council.

EL DERECHO DE VETO EN EL CONSEJO DE SEGURIDAD: SU IMPACTO EN LA CRISIS HUMANITARIA DEL CONFLICTO PALESTINO-ISRAELÍ EN 2023

RESUMEN

Esta investigación analiza el impacto del derecho de veto ejercido por los miembros permanentes del Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU en las resoluciones orientadas a mitigar la crisis humanitaria en el conflicto palestino-israelí en 2023. A través de un enfoque cualitativo, se examinan las resoluciones bloqueadas por los miembros permanentes, con énfasis en las consecuencias humanitarias resultantes. El estudio muestra cómo el uso del veto ha obstaculizado los esfuerzos de la comunidad internacional dirigidos a reducir el impacto humanitario en los territorios palestinos ocupados, resultando en una crisis humanitaria caracterizada por el desplazamiento de la población, la destrucción de infraestructura civil y el colapso de los servicios esenciales. Se concluye que, a pesar del apoyo mayoritario de los miembros del Consejo de Seguridad, el veto ha obstaculizado la acción internacional, prolongando el sufrimiento de la población y debilitando la credibilidad del Consejo de Seguridad en su capacidad para cumplir su función de mantener la paz y la seguridad internacionales.

Palabras clave

Conflicto internacional Israel – Palestina, crisis humanitaria en Gaza, Consejo de Seguridad, derecho de veto, Derecho Internacional Humanitario.

THE RIGHT TO VETO IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL: ITS IMPACT ON THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS OF THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT IN 2023

1. Introduction

The United Nations Security Council, formally established in 1945 after World War II, is the primary body responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Unlike other UN bodies, the Council has the authority to adopt binding resolutions, which makes it a fundamental organ for conflict prevention and resolution, as well as for the protection of civilians during armed violence. However, over the decades, the Council's functioning has been subject to criticism. Its structure, created in a post-war geopolitical context, maintains as permanent members—with veto power—the five victorious powers of 1945 (the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France). This composition does not reflect the current global balance and has generated debates about its representativeness and effectiveness. In particular, the use of the veto power has been questioned for hindering collective decisions in the face of serious situations or humanitarian crises, especially when the strategic interests or alliances of the permanent members are at stake.

For this reason, various reforms to the Council have been proposed, ranging from expanding the number of permanent members to limiting the use of the veto in contexts of war crimes, genocide, or human rights violations. Despite these proposals, the Council continues to face difficulties in acting coherently and effectively on issues where its intervention is urgently needed. Although this body has the responsibility to ensure compliance with International Humanitarian Law, its paralysis has been evident in multiple conflict scenarios, such as Syria, Niger, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In these cases, the vetoes exercised by permanent members have prevented the approval of resolutions aimed at alleviating human suffering, ensuring access to basic services such as health, food, or education, and stopping forced displacement.

This research focuses on a recent case that has gained great relevance in the international context: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as of October 7, 2023. During this new escalation of violence, the Security Council introduced several draft resolutions that sought urgent measures such as a ceasefire, the release of hostages, and humanitarian access to Gaza. However, seven of them were not approved due to the use of the veto by the United States, Russia, or China. This situation not only deepened an already existing humanitarian crisis, but also highlighted the limitations of international organizations in responding to humanitarian emergencies.

Given this context, this research seeks to answer the following question: How has the use of the veto power by the permanent members of the UN Security Council impacted the humanitarian response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict crisis in 2023?

1.1 Objectives

1.1.1 General Objective

To analyze the impact of the right to veto exercised by the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council on resolutions aimed at mitigating the humanitarian crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during 2023.

1.1.2 Specific Objectives

1. To determine how the use of the right to veto by the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council has affected international resolutions aimed at mitigating the humanitarian crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2023.
2. To analyze the impact of the blocked resolutions on the humanitarian conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

1.2.1 Creation of the United Nations

At the end of World War II, in 1945, Nations were devastated by the war and seeking peace. In this

context, representatives from 50 countries met at the San Francisco Conference with the goal of establishing a new international organization that would help prevent future wars (United Nations, n.d.-d).

After a process that began with the *Atlantic Charter* in 1941 and the *Declaration of the United Nations* in 1942, the drafting of the *United Nations Charter* took place at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in 1944 and concluded with its signing at the San Francisco Conference in 1945 (United Nations, n.d.-a). After the Charter was ratified by China, France, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and the majority of the signatory countries, the United Nations (UN) was established on October 24, 1945, with the objective of maintaining international peace and security (United Nations, n.d.-d). While this is its main goal, the UN also seeks to improve relations among nations and promote international cooperation on issues such as human rights and development (United Nations Charter, 1945). Nevertheless, the organization continues to face challenges in resolving global conflicts. To address these, the UN has six main organs: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat (United Nations Charter, 1945).

Fulfilling the UN's main objective involves not only conflict prevention but also creating conditions that allow for sustainable peace (United Nations, n.d.-e). To achieve this, the Security Council must assess whether there is a threat to peace or if an act of aggression has occurred. Threats to peace include conflicts between states, internal disputes with regional implications, and broader issues such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation, or illicit arms trafficking (United Nations Security Council, n.d.-a). On the other hand, an act of aggression, according to *Resolution 3314, Definition of Aggression*, is “the use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations” (United Nations General Assembly, 1974d, p. 151). Additionally, the resolution identifies examples of aggression such as invasion, bombing, and port blockades when carried out by one state's armed forces against another (United Nations General Assembly, 1974d). If the Security Council determines that such a situation exists, it may call on the involved parties to resolve their disputes peacefully or establish the conditions for reaching a solution (United Nations, n.d.-e). In this regard, paragraph 3 of Article 24 of the *United Nations Charter (1945)* states that the Security Council must submit annual reports to the General Assembly to assess its activities in maintaining peace.

Beyond the actions that the Security Council can take to resolve conflicts, the international community has developed the principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which asserts that states have the responsibility to protect their populations from serious human rights violations such as genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity (Açıkyıldız, 2018; Menéndez Del Valle, 2016). However, when a state is unable or unwilling to ensure this protection—or is itself the perpetrator of these violations—the international community has an obligation to intervene to safeguard the victims (Trent & Schnurr, 2018a).

The concept of R2P emerged in the late 1990s, following the international community's failure to respond to crimes committed in Rwanda and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which led to genocide and crimes against humanity. In response, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) produced a report in 2001 that laid the foundations of R2P, proposing a shift in the concept of sovereignty—from being seen as an absolute right of states to a responsibility to protect their populations (Genser, 2022). Following these events, the UN formally incorporated the R2P principle in 2005 through *Resolution A/RES/60/1, 2005 World Summit Outcome Document* (United Nations General Assembly, 2005), establishing that conflict prevention is not only the responsibility of individual states but also a duty of the international community.

R2P is based on three pillars: first, the responsibility of the state to protect its population from mass atrocities; second, the international community's duty to assist states in fulfilling this responsibility through international support; and third, the international community's responsibility to act—first through peaceful means, and if necessary, through the use of force—when a state fails to protect its population (Genser, 2022; Šimonović, 2017). In practice, R2P has been invoked in various crises. In 2011, the UN Security Council invoked R2P in response to the violence committed by Muammar Gaddafi's government against civilians in Libya. Through *Resolution 1973*, it authorized the establishment of a no-fly zone and the use of all necessary measures to protect the population, which enabled NATO's intervention. However, the operation, which was initially humanitarian in nature, ultimately contributed to Gaddafi's overthrow and the destabilization of the country (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023).

Thus, the UN implements various mechanisms to ensure the application of R2P and prevent conflicts. These range from preventive diplomacy, promoted by different organs such as the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, to coercive measures enforced by the Security Council. However, the exercise of the right to veto by permanent members has hindered the implementation of this principle on numerous occasions, weakening its reach and effectiveness.

1.2.2 Conflict Resolution

To resolve international disputes, and depending on their severity, the UN proposes different mechanisms ranging from diplomatic actions to coercive measures.

First, diplomatic means such as preventive diplomacy and mediation aim to prevent conflicts in order to reduce both human suffering and the economic costs derived from a dispute (United Nations General Assembly, n.d.-e). On one hand, preventive diplomacy refers to measures taken to prevent a dispute from escalating. In general, it seeks to promote dialogue through diplomatic envoys in the conflict zone, while the Security Council also plays an important role by adopting resolutions aimed at avoiding the use of force. Through these actions, a peaceful resolution is expected to be achieved (Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, n.d.). An example of preventive diplomacy is Security Council *Resolution 2118 (2013)*, adopted after the chemical weapons attack in Ghouta, Syria, on August 21, 2013. In response, the Council ordered the destruction of the country's chemical weapons and prohibited their production or transfer. Furthermore, it established that, in the event of non-compliance, coercive measures could be imposed (United Nations Security Council, 2013). With this Resolution, the aim was to prevent both the proliferation of chemical weapons and a military intervention in the conflict.

Mediation, on the other hand, seeks to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts at their different stages: before they escalate into armed conflict, during outbreaks of violence, or during the implementation phase of peace agreements. Unlike preventive diplomacy, mediation is not limited to dialogue and negotiation; it may also include technical, financial, and political support. Typically, the actor leading mediation efforts is the Secretary-General, whether at the request of the parties in conflict, on their own initiative, or upon request by the Security Council or the General Assembly (Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, n.d.; Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs et al., 2012). A relevant case of mediation is Security Council *Resolution 2451 (2018)*, which supported the agreements reached between the Government of Yemen and the Houthis during the negotiations in Stockholm, facilitated by the UN Special Envoy. The agreement included a ceasefire in Al-Hudaydah, the withdrawal of military forces from the city, the exchange of prisoners, and measures to improve humanitarian access in Taiz (United Nations Security Council, 2018). With this Resolution, the UN supported mediation efforts and authorized the deployment of a team to monitor compliance with the agreement.

If a dispute cannot be resolved through peaceful means, the Security Council may employ other tools to respond to threats to international peace and security, as established in Chapter VII of the Charter.

Article 41 establishes that, when the Security Council determines that there is a threat to peace and security, it has the authority to decide which measures not involving the use of armed force shall be employed to enforce its decisions. These may include the complete or partial interruption of economic, diplomatic, or communication relations (United Nations Charter, 1945). Such measures are imposed on States, groups, or individuals, depending on the situation, and may range from economic and trade sanctions to arms embargoes, travel bans, financial restrictions, the establishment of international tribunals, among others. Over time, the purpose of imposing these measures has been to combat terrorism, protect human rights, prevent unconstitutional seizures of power, or stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons (United Nations Security Council, n.d.-a, n.d.-c). One of the most representative cases of coercive measures is *Resolution 2375 (2017)*, adopted in response to the nuclear test conducted by North Korea on September 2, 2017, in violation of previous resolutions on nuclear non-proliferation. Consequently, the Council imposed a series of economic and trade sanctions, including restrictions on oil, gas, and textile trade with the country, the prohibition of operations with North Korean companies, and the denial of work permits to North Korean citizens. It also called on Member States to inspect ships on the high seas if there were suspicions that they were transporting prohibited goods (United Nations Security Council, 2017). These measures aimed to restrict North Korea's ability to finance and develop its nuclear program.

Once these measures are applied, the Security Council, through its sanctions committees, must monitor the imposition, modification, and lifting of the measures, as well as gather information on their effectiveness (United Nations Security Council, n.d.-a). However, when previous measures are insufficient and the threat to peace and security persists, Article 42 authorizes the Council to use force as a last resort, including air, sea, or land operations (United Nations Charter, 1945). Since the UN does not have its own armed forces, the Council, through a resolution, authorizes the use of force and leaves its implementation in the hands of States or regional organizations, overseeing that its execution aligns with the objectives established in the resolution (United Nations Security Council, n.d.-a).

Although the use of force may be authorized by the Security Council, its implementation must respect a set of norms aimed at reducing the impact of armed conflicts. For this purpose, International Humanitarian

Law establishes rules necessary for the protection of the civilian population and the regulation of methods of warfare, which must be observed by all parties involved in a conflict (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2004).

1.2.3 International Humanitarian Law

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is the body of rules that regulate the conduct of armed conflicts in order to limit their effects and protect people who are not, or are no longer, participating in the hostilities. Its main objective is to reduce human suffering during times of war by establishing rules and limits on methods of warfare to ensure respect for fundamental rights, even amidst armed conflict (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2012).

The origins of IHL date back to 1864 with the First Geneva Convention, which established the protection of wounded soldiers on the battlefield and laid the foundations for the development of modern IHL (Saillard et al., 2002). Since then, several additional Conventions and Protocols have been adopted, strengthening the legal framework. These have been accepted and adopted by the international community and are mandatory for UN Member States (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2012). IHL focuses on two main areas: first, the protection of individuals who are not or are no longer participating in hostilities; and second, the restriction of methods and means of warfare, by setting limits on the use of weapons and military strategies (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2004).

The Geneva Conventions, adopted in 1949, establish different categories of protection for individuals in armed conflicts (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2012). According to the American Red Cross (2006), the First Convention protects wounded soldiers on land, the Second Convention protects combatants at sea, the Third Convention regulates the treatment of prisoners of war, and the Fourth Convention protects civilians in conflict zones. In addition, the Additional Protocols extended these protections to civilians and medical personnel, reinforced protections for victims of high-intensity conflicts, and also addressed the adoption of additional distinctive emblems (American Red Cross, 2006).

Despite the existence of these instruments, various actors continue to use methods of warfare that violate IHL, such as the indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in populated areas and deliberate attacks on civilian infrastructure. These actions may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, or even genocide (Secretary-General, 2024). Such violations of IHL undermine trust in the international system and underscore the urgency of protecting vulnerable populations. States have the obligation to ensure respect for IHL by disseminating its rules, preventing violations, and establishing laws that punish war crimes (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2004). To reinforce this commitment, it is necessary to promote the inclusion of diverse voices in peace processes in order to achieve sustainable solutions to armed conflicts (Secretary-General, 2024).

Violations of International Humanitarian Law intensify humanitarian crises, contributing to the commission of war crimes, forced displacement, and the systematic violation of human rights (Sarango Llinin, 2024).

1.2.4 Humanitarian Crises

According to Lozano (2019), a humanitarian crisis is an emergency situation in which a population is severely affected and requires immediate assistance in food, medical services, and other essential resources for survival. Without an effective response, humanitarian crises may lead to forced displacement, famines, increased mortality, disappearances, and other forms of human rights violations (Lozano, 2019). Humanitarian crises are caused by various factors, mainly armed conflicts, but they may also be triggered by natural disasters, political emergencies, or economic crises (Pérez de Armiño, 2004).

Climate-related humanitarian crises include floods, droughts, and crop failures—especially in African countries such as Niger, Zambia, Malawi, or Cameroon, where large segments of the population face food insecurity or are forced to flee their homes. Similarly, health emergencies have led to humanitarian crises, such as those caused by the COVID-19¹ pandemic and the mpox² outbreak, which also had a higher prevalence in African countries (CARE, 2025; UNICEF, n.d.). In the case of humanitarian crises caused by armed conflict, these involve severe violations of IHL, including the indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in civilian areas and attacks on civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, and places of worship (Secretary-General,

¹ COVID-19 is a viral disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It typically causes mild to moderate respiratory symptoms, but in some cases, it can be severe (WHO, n.d.).

² Monkeypox, or mpox, is a viral disease transmitted through close contact with infected people, objects, or animals. Its symptoms include fever, muscle pain, and swollen lymph nodes (WHO, 2024).

2024). Examples of humanitarian crises resulting from armed conflicts include the situation in Palestine, the war in Sudan, and the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Syria (UN Refugee Agency, 2025; UNICEF, n.d.).

Humanitarian crises have devastating effects on the civilian population, particularly on vulnerable groups such as children, women, the elderly, refugees, internally displaced persons, and Indigenous peoples. As a result of such crises, by the end of 2023, the number of forcibly displaced persons had surpassed 114 million (Secretary-General, 2024). In 2024, approximately 300 million people worldwide were in need of humanitarian assistance—a number that continues to grow due to the protraction of conflicts in countries such as Niger, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, Yemen, and Palestine (Cohen et al., 2024).

To alleviate these crises, states, organizations, and various actors must send humanitarian aid to conflict zones. This aid consists of emergency measures aimed at saving lives and reducing human suffering. The most common forms of humanitarian aid include medical assistance and the provision of food, water, and hygiene products (Cortés-Nieto et al., 2024). However, humanitarian crises are often worsened by restrictions on aid delivery and a lack of political will to prioritize humanitarian needs over state interests. The United Nations Security Council has the power to approve or veto resolutions that authorize the delivery of humanitarian aid to crisis areas (United Nations Regional Information Centre, 2023a).

1.2.5 Security Council

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the principal body responsible for maintaining international peace and security within the UN (United Nations Security Council, n.d.-b). This body is based on the concept of collective security, which has its roots in the 1919 *League of Nations Covenant* and committed its members to protecting the political independence and territorial integrity of all against external aggression (League of Nations, 1919).

According to Omodeo (1995), collective security is a system in which security is no longer an individual matter, but one that now concerns all states. In this way, each nation must protect the security of others as if it were their own. Therefore, in the event of an aggression, all nations will take collective measures to ensure their protection and restore peace. For his part, Claude (1956) argues that collective security is based on the idea that each state acts as a protector of others, following the principle of mutual solidarity. In this sense, collective security represents an international application of the motto "one for all and all for one," as it implies that any nation that threatens peace must face a collective response from the rest of the international community. Conversely, Morgenthau (1949) criticizes the principle of collective security, arguing that, rather than replacing the balance of power, it reinforces it by establishing a global alliance against any aggressor. Although this system involves a commitment by all states to respond to aggression, in practice, states may prioritize their own interests, preventing a uniform response. With the creation of the UN in 1945, the concept of collective security was adopted to establish a Security Council with five permanent members, responsible for ensuring peace. According to Article 25 of the *UN Charter (1945)*, all member states are obligated to comply with and implement the Council's decisions, as opposed to other UN bodies, which can only issue recommendations. The Security Council's resolutions are binding. This is because the Security Council, under Chapter VII of the Charter, is the only body authorized to use force to enforce its provisions (Mejía, 2023).

The maintenance of peace in the UN is based on principles such as the consent of the involved states, the use of force only in self-defense, and impartiality (Barea Ripoll, 2009), as well as ensuring the implementation of R2P. Thanks to these principles, states accept that the Security Council has the authority to examine international conflicts that threaten peace, establish peacekeeping missions, impose economic sanctions, create tribunals to judge war crimes, and authorize other members to take coercive actions to correct the behavior of a member (Trent & Schnurr, 2018a).

Moreover, the Council has multiple subsidiary bodies to address specific issues, not only for peacekeeping but also to address humanitarian concerns such as the refugee situation, combating terrorism, or post-conflict reconstruction (Trent & Schnurr, 2018a). While the Security Council has proven influential since the end of the Cold War, it faces criticism today for its lack of representativeness and reliance on the right to veto.

1.2.6 Permanent and Non-Permanent Members of the Security Council

Currently, the Security Council is composed of 15 members, five of which are permanent, known as the P5: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The other 10 members are elected by the General Assembly for a two-year term, representing various regions of the world (United Nations Regional

Information Centre, 2015). For the current period, the non-permanent members are Algeria, Denmark, Slovenia, Greece, Guyana, Pakistan, Panama, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, and Somalia (United Nations Security Council, 2025).

The permanent members of the Council are the five victorious powers of World War II, which were part of the Allied side and opposed the Axis Powers (Sadurní, 2023). Due to their role in the war, it was considered that these members had the military and geopolitical capacity to ensure international peace and security (Bosco, 2009). For this reason, they were granted right to veto, in order to guarantee their influence in the decision-making of the Security Council.

1.2.7 Right to Veto

Although the term "right to veto" is not explicitly mentioned in the text of the *United Nations Charter*, it is grounded in Article 27, which states that resolutions of the Security Council on substantive issues require the affirmative vote of at least nine members, and that no permanent member can vote against (United Nations Charter, 1945). This means that any permanent member can prevent the adoption of a resolution with their negative vote, which is known as the right to veto.

The right to veto was created with the purpose of ensuring that the major powers of the time worked together to preserve international peace and security and thus avoid them leaving the UN to protect their own interests (Trent & Schnurr, 2018a). According to Mejía (2023), this is because the Security Council is organized following the principle of the balance of power, meaning that the victorious powers of World War II must maintain an important role in international decision-making. In this way, the right to veto allows them to ensure that none of the P5 loses influence on international security issues, which would prevent conflicts arising from an unequal distribution of power.

However, the privilege of the right to veto is the main difference between the permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council, with the P5 using it to protect their national interests (Security Council Reports, 2024).

1.2.8 Voting Procedure

The voting process in the Security Council is defined in Article 27 of the *United Nations Charter*, where a distinction is made between procedural issues and other substantive issues, although it does not specify which fall into each category, which has led to disagreements.

Decisions on procedural issues require the affirmative vote of at least nine of the fifteen members of the Council, regardless of the position of the permanent members. On the other hand, for a resolution on substantive issues to be adopted, at least nine votes in favor of the fifteen members of the Council are required. However, if any of the P5 members votes against, the resolution is rejected, regardless of the number of votes in favor (United Nations Charter, 1945). Nevertheless, if a permanent member does not wish to vote in favor, they have the option to abstain, which allows the resolution to be approved if it garners the necessary votes (United Nations Regional Information Centre, 2023c).

Voting is usually conducted in formal open sessions, and the results are recorded in the meeting's minutes. The resolutions cover everything from sanctions or peacekeeping mandates to coercive measures, allowing the Council to intervene in response to threats to peace, including military measures or restrictions such as asset freezes or travel bans (United Nations Regional Information Centre, 2023c). For these reasons, both the approved resolutions and those vetoed have direct consequences on the response to international conflicts, determining the scope of the Security Council's actions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Impact of the Veto on Decision-Making

The veto power in the Security Council has had a significant impact on the United Nations' ability to make decisions and act in response to international conflicts and humanitarian crises. However, as noted by Wouters & Ruys (2005b), analyzing the use of the veto can be complicated, as states often do not share details about their reasons for vetoing, or their explanations may not reflect their true motives. To this is added the concept of the "hidden veto," a form of veto in which a permanent member expresses its intention to block a resolution before it is put to a vote. This generally occurs in informal consultations, where the P5 can pressure other members and prevent certain issues from being addressed (Nahory, 2004; Stop Illegitimate Vetoes, 2015).

An example of the use of the hidden veto happened during the Kosovo crisis in the 1990s, when a draft resolution was not submitted for a vote due to the likelihood that China and Russia would vote against it. According to Hans Corell, former Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and Legal Counsel of the United Nations, this draft should have been voted on so there would be an official record of the opposition of those countries (Stop Illegitimate Vetoes, 2015). Due to the lack of public records, it is difficult to determine the full extent of hidden vetoes. However, official vetoes do allow for a record of their use.

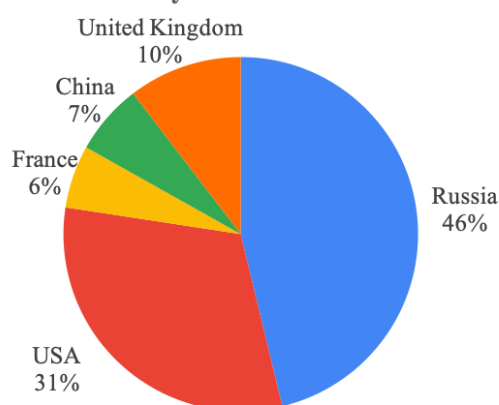
The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was the first to exercise the veto, in 1946, by blocking a draft resolution related to the withdrawal of foreign troops from Lebanon and Syria (Security Council Reports, 2024).

As shown in Figure 1, Russia has exercised 46% of the recorded vetoes, followed by the United States, with 31%. In contrast, the United Kingdom, France, and China have used the veto on fewer occasions (Dag Hammarskjöld Library, 2024).

Figure 1

Percentage of Vetoes Cast by Each Permanent Member Since 1946

Percentage of Vetoes Cast by Each Permanent Member Since 1946

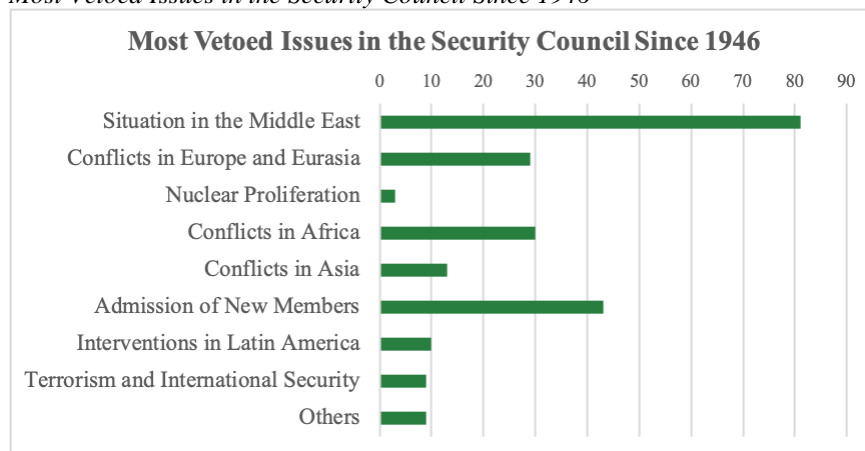


Note: Adapted from "List of Vetoes," by the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library, n.d.

Regarding the most frequently vetoed topics, issues related to the Middle East (including the question of Palestine and Syria), the admission of new members, and conflicts in Africa stand out. As shown in Figure 2, since 1946, the veto has most often been used to block resolutions concerning the situation in the Middle East, with over 80 recorded vetoes (Dag Hammarskjöld Library, 2024).

Figure 2

Most Vetoed Issues in the Security Council Since 1946



Note: Adapted from "List of Vetoes," by the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library, n.d.

In 1955, the Republic of China used its veto power to block the admission of Mongolia to the UN, arguing that the territory was part of China. Years later, in 1997 and 1999, China vetoed resolutions seeking to

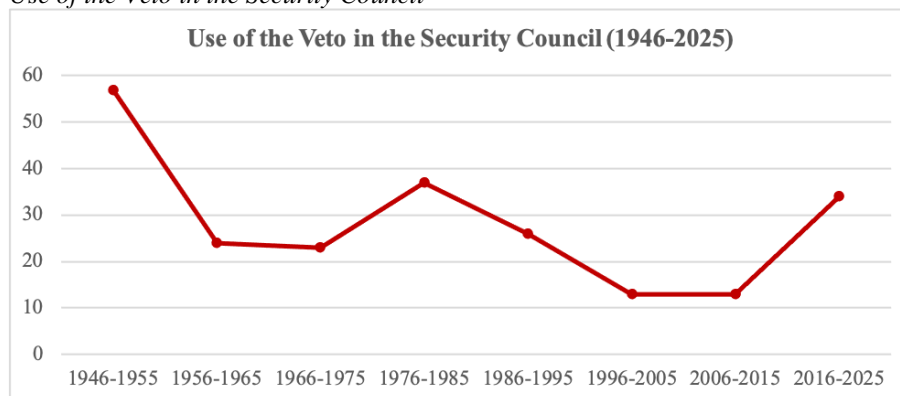
establish an observer mission in Guatemala and to renew the UN mission in Macedonia, citing the diplomatic relations of these countries with Taiwan, which China considers part of its territory (Wouters & Ruys, 2005b).

In 2004, Russia and China threatened to veto resolutions related to the conflict in Darfur, where armed groups supported by the Sudanese government committed serious human rights violations. These decisions were motivated by economic interests, as China controlled 40% of Sudan's oil fields, and both countries had arms trade agreements with the Sudanese regime. As a result, the UN could not intervene directly and was limited to carrying out investigations and adopting minimal measures, despite the death toll exceeding 400,000 people (Wouters & Ruys, 2005b). In a similar situation, in October 2011, Russia and China vetoed a Security Council resolution that sought to condemn human rights violations in Syria. The resolution called on the Syrian government to stop using force against civilians, respect human rights, protect freedom of expression, and release political prisoners (Açıkyıldız, 2018). While the United States, the United Kingdom, and France have taken a firmer stance against the Syrian government, Russia and China have insisted on respecting national sovereignty (Cohen et al., 2024).

The use of the veto has varied over time. As shown in Figure 3, the period with the most vetoes was in the early years after the creation of the UN. Its use later declined, with an increase between 1976 and 1985. However, in the most recent decade, the use of the veto has risen again (Dag Hammarskjöld Library, 2024).

Figure 3

Use of the Veto in the Security Council



Note: Adapted from "List of Vetoes," by the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library, n.d.

Over 90% of the vetoes presented since 2004 are related to three main conflicts: Syria, Ukraine, and Palestine. For instance, since 2014, Russia has vetoed initiatives related to its invasion of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. Moreover, in July 2023, Russia vetoed a resolution to extend humanitarian aid to northern Syria for nine more months, leaving 4.1 million people with limited access to food, water, and medicine (Cohen et al., 2024). On the other hand, the United States has blocked ceasefire proposals in Gaza and the admission of Palestine as a member of the United Nations, despite broad support for these initiatives in the General Assembly (Cohen et al., 2024).

2.2 Criticism and Reforms to the Security Council

For years, the United Nations Security Council has faced numerous criticisms due to the concentration of power in its five permanent members, who often make decisions based on their own political interests. Firstly, it is important to mention that the Security Council has partially fulfilled its objective, as it has kept the P5 within the Council and the United Nations, and there have been no direct military confrontations between them. This was especially significant during the Cold War, when the USSR was the only communist country among the P5 (Wouters & Ruys, 2005a). Despite this, the veto system has been considered ineffective in addressing current international peace and security needs. Silva González and Gener Crespo (2020) argue that the lack of rotation among the permanent members makes the Council an undemocratic body, and one that influences other UN organs, such as the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Likewise, the Council has shown unequal responses to international crises. García (2013) and Torres Cazorla (2008) agree that the Council's effectiveness depends on the interests of the permanent members. Pons Rafols (2024) illustrates this by noting that in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the United States has repeatedly used its veto to block resolutions that go against Israeli interests, thus limiting the Security Council's ability to act effectively.

Another major criticism of the Council is the disconnect between its structure and today's reality, as the number of UN member states has increased from 51 in 1945 to 193 today—many of them having gained independence from P5 colonial powers. This new reality highlights the need for the Security Council to be more inclusive (Cohen et al., 2024). In addition, the P5 are responsible for 75% of global arms sales, which raises controversy about their role as peacekeepers, especially since armed conflicts are among the main causes of humanitarian crises and forced displacement (Cohen et al., 2024). Furthermore, Security Council vetoes are often not used to protect vital national interests but to support allies—for example, the U.S. with Israel, and Russia with Syria (Trent & Schnurr, 2018b).

Since the founding of the United Nations, there have been proposals to reform the Security Council and the use of the veto. During the San Francisco negotiations, Iran proposed that an affirmative vote by eight members should be sufficient to pass a decision; Egypt added that for important decisions, the favorable vote of at least four permanent members should be required; Cuba proposed implementing a voting system similar to the General Assembly's; and El Salvador expressed the idea that if unanimous approval by the permanent members was not achieved, the resolutions should be referred to the General Assembly for a final decision (Fernbach, 1945). Later, Wouters and Ruys (2005a) suggested conducting periodic reviews of the permanent members every 10 or 20 years to adapt to changes in the world order. These authors also proposed that resolutions could only be blocked if at least two of the P5 issued a veto.

The veto has been regarded as an obstacle to addressing humanitarian crises and prolonged conflicts in regions such as Gaza, Ukraine, Syria, and Mali, thus, questioning the credibility of the United Nations (United Nations Regional Information Centre, 2023b). In light of these criticisms, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has stated that reforming the Council is essential for the organization's effectiveness, declaring that what is needed is either reform or rupture (United Nations Regional Information Centre, 2023b). In this context, debates have emerged around expanding the Council's composition by including more permanent and non-permanent members. Countries such as Brazil, Mexico, India, South Africa, Japan, and Germany have been considered candidates, with the aim of achieving more equitable representation that includes at least one member from each continent (Global Policy Watch, 2024). However, the use of the veto remains controversial. While countries as France and the United Kingdom have suggested commitments to limit its use in humanitarian situations, other permanent members oppose making significant changes (United Nations Regional Information Centre, 2023b).

In this regard, one of the most significant reforms was General Assembly Resolution 377, known as the "Uniting for Peace" Resolution, from 1950. This resolution was an attempt to overcome the paralysis of the Security Council, which occurred due to the use of the veto power, blocking Council action in critical situations due to a lack of consensus among its members. Through this resolution, the General Assembly was granted the ability to intervene on behalf of international peace and security (United Nations General Assembly, 1950). The resolution established that, when the Council was unable to act due to a veto, the General Assembly could address the issue and recommend collective measures, including interventions, sanctions, or the use of force. Although the General Assembly's decisions are not binding, the resolution aimed to give the Assembly a more significant role in ensuring peace (United Nations General Assembly, 1950).

One of the most recent reforms is General Assembly *Resolution 76/262*, adopted in April 2022. This resolution requires permanent members of the Security Council to justify the use of their veto in a General Assembly debate. Although the measure is not legally binding, it is considered a step forward in promoting greater transparency and accountability in the use of the veto, encouraging multilateralism in decision-making (United Nations General Assembly, 2022).

2.3 Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

2.3.1 Creation of the State of Israel

The origins of the State of Israel are linked to events that took place in Europe during the 19th century, particularly due to the growing antisemitism that affected Jewish communities. During this period, some European nationalist movements, such as the German and French ones, began to display aggressive attitudes towards Jews, leading to their persecution and marginalization. This situation sparked a wave of Jewish migration to various parts of the world, especially to the United States, the United Kingdom, Argentina, Canada, and Palestine (Ramos Tolosa, 2022).

Although antisemitism intensified in the 19th century, it has deeper roots going back to the Middle Ages. In this hostile context, the Zionist movement was born in 1896, founded by Theodor Herzl. This movement was not only a response to the persecution of Jews but also an attempt to preserve Jewish identity

in a context of growing cultural homogenization in Europe (France 24, 2023; Fullerton, 1917). While in its early stages Zionism attempted to integrate Jews into European societies, it soon became clear that persecution was a problem difficult to resolve within those countries. Thus, one of its main goals became the creation of a Jewish state to protect this population from growing antisemitism (Echeverry Tamayo, 2021).

At the same time, the territory of Palestine was under the control of the already declining Ottoman Empire. The official religion of the Empire was Islam, and the majority of the population was Arab. Nevertheless, the existence of multiple religions and ethnicities was respected and acknowledged. In Palestine, 86% of the population was Muslim, 3% Jewish, and 11% Christian. Over the years, Jewish migration to Palestine increased, along with the influence of the Zionist movement. In the beginning, Jews began acquiring land, although they continued to employ Arab labor. However, over time, non-Jewish individuals began to be excluded from the labor market, initiating a process of segregation (Ramos Tolosa, 2022).

During World War I, Palestine held significant strategic importance for Great Britain, especially for control of the Suez Canal and the security of India (Brunetto, 2006). Zionist leaders sought support from the British government to form an alliance, arguing that the Jewish people needed a homeland, which should be located in the original territories of the Jewish people, from where they had been expelled nearly two thousand years earlier by the Roman Empire. After centuries of marginalization, discrimination, and persecution in Europe, integration of Jews into European nations was seen as impossible (France 24, 2023). As a result, on November 2, 1917, Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour sent a letter to the World Zionist Organization, later known as the Balfour Declaration, in which he expressed British support for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, although not with the intention of establishing a Jewish State (United Nations, 1980). The Balfour Declaration gave the Zionist movement formal backing for its aspirations in Palestine. However, the Arab population opposed Jewish immigration and the sale of Arab land to Jews, as Palestine was a territory mostly inhabited by Arabs who hoped that it would eventually become an independent Arab state. Despite this, the British Empire maintained its support for the Zionist project (Brunetto, 2006).

After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the British Mandate over Palestine was established during the Paris (1919) and Sanremo (1920) conferences—a Type A mandate that strengthened the Zionist presence in the region. This mandate applied to territories that, after the war, were no longer under the control of their previous rulers. In the case of certain communities of the Ottoman Empire, their capacity to become independent nations was recognized, under the supervision of a mandatory power that would provide administrative assistance and advice until they could govern themselves (League of Nations, 1920). For Palestinian nationalist leaders, Britain was making contradictory decisions: establishing a Jewish homeland while guaranteeing the civil and religious rights of the inhabitants of Palestine (United Nations, 1990).

From 1920 onward, and throughout the interwar period, confrontations between Arabs and Jews became increasingly frequent for reasons such as the lack of autonomy for Palestine, Jewish immigration, and land acquisition. Tensions peaked in 1936, when the Arab Revolt broke out, a widespread uprising against British administration and Jewish immigration, once again demonstrating the incompatibility of Britain's commitments to both groups and deepening the rift between Jews and Arabs in the region. In response, Britain attempted to find solutions through partition plans and autonomy proposals, although it was ultimately unsuccessful (Brunetto, 2006).

The situation worsened after World War II due to a new wave of Jewish migration, driven by the persecution suffered during the Shoah³. In February 1947, Britain decided to withdraw from Palestine and handed the issue over to the UN for reasons such as its inability to manage the conflict; the post-war economic crisis, which made it impossible to maintain the Mandate in Palestine; pressure from the United States to allow more Jewish immigration, while the British feared a violent Arab reaction; and the violence of radical Zionist groups against British forces (Brunetto, 2006; Morris, 1948). An example of U.S. pressure to allow more Jewish immigration into the territory was the case of the Exodus 1947, a ship secretly acquired by the Zionist organization Haganah in 1946 to transport Jewish refugees. In July 1947, it carried over 4,500 Shoah survivors from France with the aim of breaking the British blockade and entering Palestine. However, before reaching the coast, the vessel was intercepted by the British Navy, resulting in the death of three people and dozens of injuries. The passengers were deported to Germany, sparking global outrage and weakening the British position in the region (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.).

Likewise, in April 1947, Britain had requested the UN to convene a special session to examine the conflict and find possible solutions. This led to the creation of the United Nations Special Committee on

³ Shoah (catastrophe) is the Hebrew term used to refer to the Holocaust, the systematic extermination of approximately one-third of the Jewish people during World War II. Its use aims to highlight the uniqueness of the event and to show respect for the memory of the victims (Reform Judaism, n.d.).

Palestine (UNSCOP), with representatives from 11 countries, none of them members of the P5: Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia (Brunetto, 2006; Morris, 1948; Ramos Tolosa, 2012). During UNSCOP's visit to Palestine, the reception from Jewish and Arab communities was very different: the Jewish Agency welcomed the delegation, showcased economic achievements, and emphasized the need for a Jewish state; meanwhile, the Arab Higher Committee decided to boycott the mission and refused to cooperate, arguing that Palestinian sovereignty was not a matter to be negotiated. This influenced the Committee's perception, which viewed the Jewish communities as modern and progressive, and the Arab communities as underdeveloped (Morris, 1948; Ramos Tolosa, 2012). After reviewing large amounts of documentation and testimonies, in September, UNSCOP recommended partitioning the territory into two states, one Jewish and one Arab (Morris, 1948; United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, 1947).

Finally, following UNSCOP's recommendation, on November 29, 1947, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, approving the Partition Plan with Economic Union, dividing the territory of Palestine into 54% for the Jewish state, 45% for the Arab state, and 1% for Jerusalem, as a *corpus separatum* under international administration (Portilla Gómez, 2007; Ramos Tolosa, 2012). The special regime of Jerusalem was due to its religious importance for Judaism, Islam, and Christianity; therefore, the city was to be administered by the United Nations Trusteeship Council, which would guarantee the protection of the Holy Places, free access to them, and the religious rights of all communities. This administration of Jerusalem sought to prevent the city from becoming the object of a territorial conflict between the future States of Israel and Palestine. The goal was to maintain a neutral status and protect religious freedom (United Nations, 1997).

Additionally, the Partition Plan stated that the British Mandate should end before August 1, 1948, with the withdrawal of British forces; that each state should have its own government; and that, with an economic union, both states should cooperate on economic matters, such as trade, currency, infrastructure, and resource access (United Nations General Assembly, 1947). To pass the resolution in the General Assembly, a two-thirds majority of valid votes was required (not counting abstentions or absentees), and when it became clear this majority would not be reached, the United States pressured several countries—such as Haiti, Liberia, and the Philippines—to change their votes in favor of the Partition Plan. The resolution was eventually approved with 33 votes in favor, 13 against, and 10 abstentions (Ramos Tolosa, 2012). However, Arab countries and Palestinian representatives rejected the Partition, arguing that it went against the will of the Palestinian majority and that it was unjust for Palestine to pay for crimes committed against Jews in Europe. They also questioned the fact that the Plan granted 55% of the territory to the Jewish community, which at that time only made up 33% of the population and owned between 6% and 8% of the land (Brunetto, 2006; Ramos Tolosa, 2012).

As a consequence of the Partition, a civil war broke out in the territory between Jewish militias and Palestinian armed groups. Palestinian protests and riots led to attacks on Jewish transportation and businesses, and in response, radical Zionist groups attacked Palestinian neighborhoods and villages, adopting Plan Dalet, which aimed to consolidate territorial control over key cities by eliminating Palestinian resistance—often involving forced displacement. By April 1948, Palestine's major cities were under Israeli control, and around 250,000 Palestinians had been expelled (Pappe, 2006). Following these events, on May 14, 1948, one day before the official end of the British Mandate, David Ben-Gurion, leader of the Jewish Agency, officially proclaimed the State of Israel in Tel Aviv through Israel's Declaration of Independence. This document justified the creation of the State based on the historical connection of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, the international backing of the Balfour Declaration, the League of Nations Mandate, and UN *Resolution 181*. It also highlighted the urgent need for a safe home for Jews after the Shoah, and the new state's commitment to democracy, equal rights, freedom of religion, and peace. Moreover, it called on the international community for recognition and cooperation and invited the Arab population within Israel to live together in peace. The proclamation received immediate recognition from the United States and the Soviet Union, granting it international legitimacy. In response, neighboring Arab countries rejected the creation of Israel, attacked it, and triggered the First Arab-Israeli War (Pappe, 2006; Ramos Tolosa, 2022).

2.3.2 1948 War

On May 15, 1948, the day after the proclamation of the State of Israel and following the withdrawal of British troops from the territory, the armies of Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon, and Iraq attacked Israel with the objective of protecting Palestine and preventing the consolidation of the Jewish State (Beinin & Hajjar, 2009; Peco Yeste & Fernández Gómez, 2005). However, the actions of the Arab states also responded to their own interests. For example, Transjordan (now Jordan) had territorial ambitions over the West Bank and East Jerusalem, especially the Old City, which hosts holy sites for both Muslims and Jews (Pappe, 2006).

The war unfolded with clashes between Palestinian forces, Israeli militias, and Arab armies. Although Israeli forces were initially outnumbered, they managed to withstand the attacks due to their military organization, logistical support from foreign powers, and the lack of coordination among Arab armies, thus achieving a strategic victory. As a result, Israel not only secured its existence as a state but also expanded its territory beyond what was established in the UN Partition Plan (Beinin & Hajar, 2009; Themis, 1988). The war ended in 1949 with the signing of the Armistice Agreements between Israel and the Arab countries. As a result, the region was divided into three areas under different controls: Israel controlled over 77% of the territory; Jordan occupied East Jerusalem and what is now known as the West Bank, while Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip. However, a Palestinian state was not created, leaving the Palestinian population in a state of political uncertainty (Beinin & Hajar, 2009; Themis, 1988).

In terms of humanitarian consequences, one of the most devastating effects of the war was the Nakba (catastrophe), which refers to the forced displacement of over 700,000 Palestinians from their homes, marking the beginning of the refugee crisis (Peco Yeste & Fernández Gómez, 2005). According to Beinin and Hajar (2009), at least 75% of these refugees left their homes due to Israeli military actions, psychological campaigns aimed at frightening the Arab population, and direct expulsions. Only about 5% were displaced by orders from Arab authorities. Palestinian refugees sought asylum in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt, where they were placed in temporary camps that eventually turned into permanent settlements. In Jordan, most obtained Jordanian citizenship, while in Lebanon and Syria, refugees faced legal and labor restrictions (Beinin & Hajar, 2009). On the other hand, the approximately 150,000 Palestinians who remained in the territory controlled by Israel were granted citizenship under the 1952 Nationality Law, which recognized as Israeli citizens those who had been Palestinian citizens before the creation of the State of Israel and who had continuously resided in the territory. As citizens, they acquired the right to vote under the Basic Law (Knesset) in 1958 (*Nationality Law 5712, 1952*; Refworld, 1958). However, although these rights existed formally, they lived under a military regime that restricted their mobility, civil rights, and political freedoms until its abolition in 1966 by Prime Minister Levi Eshkol (Beinin & Hajar, 2009; Pappé, 2006).

In response to the refugee crisis, the UN created the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) through Resolution 302 on December 8, 1949. Its goal was to provide humanitarian assistance to alleviate the hunger and misery faced by Palestinian refugees, either through material resources (food, medicine, clothing, or shelter) or financial aid (United Nations General Assembly, 1949). Although the Agency began operations in 1950, the refugee issue was never resolved and has remained a central point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both the humanitarian crisis and the lack of a Palestinian state highlighted the need for an organization to defend their rights and aspirations at the international level.

2.3.3 Creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (1964)

In response to this situation—along with the absence of dialogue between Israel and Palestinian representatives, and the need to strengthen Palestinian national identity—the need for a political entity to represent them was reinforced (Echeverry Tamayo, 2023). In response, in May 1964, during the Arab League Summit held in Cairo, Egypt, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded. Its main objective was to establish an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and to unite resistance movements, political parties, and various organizations to achieve this goal (Peco Yeste & Fernández Gómez, 2005).

In this context, the Palestinian National Council, the legislative body of the PLO, adopted the 1964 *Palestinian National Charter*, which defined the principles and objectives of the organization. The Charter, among other points, established that the territory of Palestine corresponded to the boundaries of the British Mandate, without recognizing the creation of the State of Israel or the territorial changes resulting from the 1948 war. It also recognized as Palestinians the Arabs who lived in the territory until 1947, along with their descendants, while Jews could only be considered Palestinians if they committed to living peacefully in the region. Moreover, the Charter emphasized the importance of educating Palestinians in a nationalist spirit, as their duty was to liberate their homeland. To achieve this, the struggle had to be carried out in unity with the Arab world, which was expected to provide financial and military support, as well as contribute to strengthening the identity of the Palestinian people (*Palestinian National Charter*, 1964). The Charter also rejected the partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel, which it considered illegal for going against the will of the Palestinian people. Although it recognized Judaism as a religion, it did not consider it an independent nationality within the territory. Finally, the PLO established itself as the legitimate entity responsible for leading the struggle for the liberation of Palestine and for representing its people (*Palestinian National Charter*, 1964).

The creation of the PLO in 1964 provided a political structure aimed at representing the interests of the Palestinian people. However, its role evolved over time, especially after the 1967 Six-Day War and other major events.

2.3.4 Six-Day War (1967)

The Six-Day War of 1967 was an armed conflict between Israel and three Arab countries: Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. The conflict began in May 1967, when, in response to a request for help from Syria, Egyptian troops were deployed in the Sinai Peninsula, near the Israeli border. On May 17, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser requested the withdrawal of UN observation forces, which had been deployed in the region since the 1956 war. This, along with other troop movements on the borders, generated increasing tension (Prieto Arellano, 2017). Shortly thereafter, on May 20, Egypt blocked the Strait of Tiran, preventing Israel from accessing the Red Sea and, therefore, the Gulf of Aqaba, which was vital for international trade (Beinin & Hajjar, 2009). Although war had not been officially declared, the Arab military mobilization at the borders and threats from the PLO—who had previously adopted the goal of liberating Palestine with the support of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan—caused great concern in Israel (Prieto Arellano, 2017). Feeling that its existence was at risk, Israel decided to launch a preemptive attack on June 5, 1967, against Egypt, Syria, and later Jordan. Beinin and Hajjar (2009) and Prieto Arellano (2017), agree that this was a preventive action, as Israel could not afford to wait to be attacked due to the imbalance of power with the Arab countries, which had more soldiers, planes, and tanks than Israel.

Following the start of the attack, Israel occupied the territories of the West Bank, which belonged to Jordan, the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip, which belonged to Egypt, and then moved toward the Golan Heights, which belonged to Syria and had great strategic importance (Borrego González, 1994). First, from this area, Israel could monitor the borders with Syria and Lebanon; second, the main aquifers of the region were located there, increasing its power over Syria (Prieto Arellano, 2017). On the other hand, according to Dore Gold (2012), Israel's seizure of Jerusalem was not merely a strategic decision but one that responded to the Jewish people's historical connection to the city. From the Israeli perspective, Israel's legal right to Jerusalem was stronger than that of other actors, citing the example that the Jordanian occupation of Jerusalem from 1948 to 1967 had been illegal, as it was achieved by force and without international recognition. In contrast, Israel took control of Jerusalem in the context of a defensive war, which, according to the Israeli interpretation of international law, granted it greater legitimacy to exercise sovereignty over the city (Gold, 2012).

Amid the rapid escalation of the conflict and international concern for the stability of the Middle East, the UN Security Council intervened to stop the fighting. On June 6 and 7, 1967, it adopted Resolutions 233 and 234, urging the parties to take immediate measures to cease fire and end hostilities (United Nations Security Council, 1967b). However, the fighting continued, prompting the Council to adopt Resolution 235 on June 9, 1967. This resolution reaffirmed the previous ones and reiterated the demand for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Syria. It also requested that the UN Secretary-General contact both parties to ensure compliance with the resolution and report back to the Council within two hours on the developments (United Nations Security Council, 1967b). The war ended on June 10, 1967, following the acceptance of the ceasefire by Israel and Syria in response to the Security Council's previous resolutions. With Israel's victory, the country consolidated its position as the main military power in the region (Beinin & Hajjar, 2009).

In terms of human losses and displacement, Israel suffered around 770 deaths, 2,500 injuries, and 15 prisoners. On the other hand, the Arab countries had around 15,000 dead and wounded, and 6,000 prisoners (Prieto Arellano, 2017). The war also caused the displacement of approximately 500,000 people (Gálvez, 2024). This exodus, along with the effects of the conflict, fueled Palestinian nationalist sentiment, as Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank began to identify more as Palestinians than as Egyptians or Jordanians, intensifying their struggle for an independent State (Echeverry Tamayo, 2021).

As part of diplomatic efforts to stabilize the region, on November 22, 1967, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 242. This resolution was driven by the Council's concern over the grave situation in the Middle East and emphasized the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by means of war. It was based on two fundamental principles: the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied during the conflict, and the termination of all states of belligerency, with the recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of all states in the region, ensuring their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries (United Nations Security Council, 1967a). However, Israel did not comply with the resolution and maintained its presence in the conquered territories. According to Golda Meir (1975), Resolution 242 did not require a full withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territories, but rather proposed the establishment of secure and recognized boundaries. The resolution also mentioned the existence of a refugee

problem, but did not suggest the creation of a Palestinian state. For the former Israeli prime minister, her country's goal was not to expand its territory or improve its image before the international community, but to guarantee its security, especially in the face of the growing presence of armed groups like Al-Fatah in the occupied territories (Meir, 1975). This perception was shared by Michael Walzer (2002), who stated that, after the 1967 War, many Israeli soldiers saw their struggle as a legitimate defense of the State within the 1967 borders, and not as an action in favor of settlements in the occupied territories.

According to Barreñada (n.d.), since then, the West Bank and Gaza Strip have remained under Israeli military control, characterized by a permanent state of exception, repression of Palestinian leaders and activists, appropriation of natural resources such as land and water, and the continuous expropriation of land for the construction of Israeli settlements and military bases.

The Six-Day War was also significant for the development of the PLO, which became the main representative organization of the Palestinian nationalist movement. From 1968 onward, the PLO strengthened both its armed struggle and the creation of institutions that addressed the needs of the Palestinian population, including health, education, and nutrition (Center for Development Studies and Promotion, 2017). However, the PLO's armed activities against Israel also intensified (Peco Yeste & Fernández Gómez, 2005). In line with this strengthening, the PLO adopted the *1968 Palestinian National Charter*, which retained many of the principles of the 1964 Charter but took a more radical stance against Israel. It declared Israel's existence illegal and considered it a threat to peace in the Middle East and the world. It also labeled Zionism as an aggressive, colonial, and fascist movement, contrary to liberation and progressive movements, and called on states to reject it. Furthermore, it called on Arab nations and other movements to support the liberation of Palestine (Palestinian National Charter, 1968).

The international community reacted with the adoption of two key resolutions by the UN General Assembly on November 22, 1974. On one hand, Resolution 3236 recognized the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, independence, and national sovereignty, reaffirming the role of the PLO as their legitimate representative. It was approved with 89 votes in favor, 8 against, and 37 abstentions (United Nations General Assembly, 1974b, 1974a). On the other hand, Resolution 3237 granted the PLO observer status at the UN, allowing it to participate in General Assembly debates, and was approved with 95 votes in favor, 17 against, and 19 abstentions (United Nations General Assembly, 1974c, 1974a). In both votes, support came mainly from countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Socialist Bloc, including the Soviet Union and China, while opposition was led by the United States and Israel (United Nations General Assembly, 1974a).

As the conflict in the region intensified, the positions expressed in the 1968 Charter gained greater relevance, and self-determination and armed resistance became the fundamental pillars of the PLO's strategy. This laid the groundwork for the outbreak of the First Intifada, an uprising that highlighted the discontent of the Palestinian population.

2.3.5 First Intifada (1987-1993)

The First Intifada (uprising) was a popular uprising that began in 1987 in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza, which had been under Israeli occupation since 1967. This uprising was a response to human rights violations during the occupation, including the expropriation of land for the construction of Israeli settlements, executions, arbitrary detentions, forced expulsions, home demolitions, curfews, and the closure of educational institutions. Beyond being a reaction to these conditions, the Intifada also aimed to raise international awareness of the military and political repression imposed by Israel (Cruz Azamar, 2024; Nazzal & Nazzal, 1997).

The uprising erupted on December 8, 1987, when an Israeli military truck collided with a Palestinian vehicle in Gaza, killing four people. Many Palestinians interpreted the incident as retaliation for the killing of an Israeli merchant two days earlier in Gaza, which had heightened tensions between Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the region. During the victims' funeral, clashes erupted with the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), triggering a wave of unrest that quickly spread throughout the West Bank and Gaza, marking the beginning of the Intifada (Nazzal & Nazzal, 1997).

The popular demonstrations initially began peacefully, with general strikes, boycotts of Israeli products, and organized protests in Palestinian cities and refugee camps. However, as Israeli repression intensified, with the use of lethal force, mass arrests, and movement restrictions, protesters began resorting to throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli forces. Palestinian demands included an end to the occupation, the removal of unfair taxes, the release of prisoners, and the convening of an international conference to address the future of the Occupied Territories (Musalem Rahal, 1993).

In November 1988, at the height of the uprising, PLO President Yasser Arafat declared the independence of the State of Palestine in the West Bank and Gaza (Cruz Azamar, 2024). As a result, 104 countries recognized Palestine (instead of the PLO) as a political entity through UN General Assembly *Resolution 43/177*, though it was not fully recognized as a State (United Nations General Assembly, 1988). In December 1988, the PLO recognized the existence of Israel and renounced armed struggle, prompting the United States to begin a dialogue with the organization. This marked a significant shift, as the U.S. had previously labeled the PLO as a terrorist group. This diplomatic turn laid the groundwork for future negotiations between Israel and the PLO, eventually leading to the Oslo Accords (Musalem Rahal, 1993; Nazzal & Nazzal, 1997).

As a result of the Intifada, around 40,000 Palestinians were detained, more than 1,500 Palestinians were killed—including 200 children under the age of 16—and approximately 420 Israelis also died (Uslu & Karataş, 2020). The economy of the Occupied Territories collapsed due to strikes and curfews, with unemployment rates ranging between 30% and 50%. There was an increase in the expulsion of Palestinians, along with home demolitions, property confiscations, and the closure of schools and universities. Consequently, an entire generation of youth grew up without access to education and suffered physical and psychological harm (Musalem Rahal, 1993; Nazzal & Nazzal, 1997).

During the Intifada, in 1987, Hamas, or the Islamic Resistance Movement, emerged as a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood—a religious and political movement that promoted the idea that Islam should govern not only personal life but also the structure of the state and society, based on the principles of the Quran (Jones, 2013). Hamas was officially founded on December 14, 1987, by Shaykh Ahmed Yassin and took a very different stance from that of the PLO, rejecting the two-state solution and the recognition of Israel. This Islamist movement not only sought to eliminate Israeli control but also opposed Jewish rule over Palestine, presenting itself as a legitimate representative of the entire Palestinian population, with the goal of achieving total liberation of Palestine through armed struggle (Bartal, 2021; Cruz Azamar, 2024). Yassin and other Hamas leaders criticized the PLO, arguing that it should retract its recognition of Israel, cease cooperation with the Israeli state, and return to armed struggle as a strategy. They also believed the PLO's ideas were influenced by socialism and pan-Arabism—ideologies they viewed as Western and contrary to their Islamic principles. In 1988, Hamas published its Charter, which included anti-Jewish statements and declared that only Islam could guarantee victory over Israel (Las Heras, 2024). This rise of Hamas marked a major shift in Palestinian politics. While the PLO pursued diplomatic routes for negotiations with Israel, Hamas opted for armed resistance, creating an internal rivalry that would shape the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Ultimately, the First Intifada concluded with the negotiations that led to the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO, representing a significant change in the relationship between both parties. However, Hamas continued to escalate its military activities and rejected any form of agreement with Israel (Bartal, 2021; Nazzal & Nazzal, 1997).

2.3.6 Oslo Accords (1993)

Following the First Intifada, the international community promoted a negotiation process to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Thus, the Oslo Accords (officially the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements) marked a significant milestone in the relationship between Israel and the PLO, as it was the first time both parties recognized each other. The Accords, made possible through Norwegian mediation and backed by the United States, established a framework for the creation of a Palestinian self-government and the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from certain occupied territories (Latafat, 2022; Peco Yeste & Fernández Gómez, 2005; Rajmil, 2013; Uslu & Karataş, 2020).

The Accords were divided into two parts: Oslo I and Oslo II. The Oslo I Accords, signed in 1993, agreed on the creation of an interim Palestinian government, which later became the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), to administer parts of the occupied territories. The PLO recognized Israel's right to exist and committed to ending violence, while Israel agreed to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and Jericho (Oslo I, 1993). Additionally, under these Accords, Israel would collect tax revenues generated by commercial activity in Palestine and transfer them periodically to the Palestinian Authority for administration in Gaza and the West Bank. However, this arrangement created economic dependence of the PNA on the Israeli government, without achieving full economic sovereignty (Latafat, 2022).

On the other hand, the Oslo II Accords, signed in 1995, detailed the administrative division of the West Bank into three zones, aiming to gradually grant autonomy to Palestine while ensuring Israel's security (Rajmil, 2013). Zone A would be under full control of the PNA, including major Palestinian cities such as Ramallah, Nablus, and Hebron; this represented approximately 3% of the West Bank. Zone B would have Palestinian civil administration but Israeli military control, covering about 450 Palestinian towns and villages. Finally,

Zone C would remain under full Israeli control, including settlements, roads, and military bases; this zone represented the largest part of the West Bank (Latafat, 2022; Rajmil, 2013). The Accords also called for elections to choose the president of the PNA and a Palestinian Council, and both parties agreed to cooperate on security matters such as counterterrorism to maintain peaceful relations (Oslo II, 1997).

Despite efforts to resolve the conflict, the agreements presented several limitations. According to Latafat (2022), the territorial distribution in Oslo II showed clear inequality, with Israel controlling most of the Palestinian territory, while Palestinians controlled only Gaza and a few areas in the West Bank. Furthermore, the PNA had no authority over Jerusalem or foreign relations, could not establish a military force to defend against external threats, and decisions made by the Palestinian Legislative Council could be vetoed by Israel. Additionally, both agreements postponed key issues for future negotiations, such as the status of Jerusalem, the return of Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements, and final border demarcations (Latafat, 2022; Peco Yeste & Fernández Gómez, 2005; Rajmil, 2013; Uslu & Karataş, 2020). According to Jeremy Pressman (2010), in 1993, Arafat was in a weak position, as he had lost authority among the Palestinian population after the First Intifada; other developments in the region had reduced support from the United States and several Arab countries; he was not achieving results for the Palestinians, and he feared the consequences of a potential agreement between Israel and Syria. For these reasons, he was forced to sign the Oslo Accords, despite the fact that they did not address the most important issues (Pressman, 2010). Moreover, implementation of the agreements took longer than expected, and by 1997, more than 150,000 Israeli settlers had established themselves in the occupied territories, with another 170,000 in East Jerusalem (Barreñada, n.d.).

While the Oslo Accords marked a step forward in mutual recognition, they failed to establish lasting peace. The continued expansion of Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories, restrictions on the Palestinian National Authority, and the lack of progress on fundamental issues created an atmosphere of mistrust (Barreñada, n.d.).

In this context, in July 2000, U.S. President Bill Clinton organized the Camp David Summit with the goal of reaching a final agreement between Israel and Palestine. He brought together Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PNA leader Yasser Arafat to address the unresolved issues from the Oslo Accords (Motsak & Tokarenko, 2023). On one hand, Israel proposed the unification of Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty while granting Palestinians certain rights of access to holy sites, the modification of the 1967 borders to include Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza under Israeli control, the absence of foreign military forces in the future Palestinian territory, and a solution for Palestinian refugees outside of Israel, without recognizing their right of return. On the other hand, the Palestinians demanded a return to the 1967 borders, the removal of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, the establishment of East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state, and the return or compensation of Palestinian refugees (Motsak & Tokarenko, 2023).

Negotiations lasted two weeks but ultimately failed, mainly due to disagreements over the status of Jerusalem and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Although Israel showed more willingness to negotiate, Palestinian demands were not fully met, and Arafat rejected the terms, arguing that the proposal did not guarantee a viable Palestinian state (Borger, 2000). The failure of Camp David had serious consequences, as the lack of a final agreement increased Palestinian frustration, which, along with other internal tensions, contributed to the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September 2000.

2.3.7 Second Intifada (2000-2005)

The new uprisings began after years of failed negotiations to resolve the conflict. In this context, in September 2000, Ariel Sharon, then head of the Israeli opposition, visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, accompanied by hundreds of Israeli police officers and soldiers. For the Palestinian population, this was seen as a direct provocation against Palestinian control, triggering the clashes that marked the beginning of the Second Intifada (Wang, 2020).

The Second Intifada was different from the First. While the first uprising was driven by repressed emotions and lacked a clear organizational structure, the Second Intifada was characterized by a more organized resistance, with the support of groups such as Hamas, which further complicated the situation for Israel (Phinney, 2007). Despite Israel's stronger army, access to advanced weaponry, and greater economic resources, the conflict escalated, and Israeli forces had to face a more structured and armed Palestinian resistance (Wang, 2020).

The violence during the Second Intifada had severe consequences for both sides. In 2001, Palestinian suicide attacks began, primarily carried out by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, resulting in the deaths of more than 500 people by 2004. In response, Israel launched Operation "Defensive Shield" in 2002, an invasion of the West Bank that led to the reoccupation of Palestinian cities, the deaths of over 500 people, more than 6,000

arrests, and a campaign of targeted assassinations that eliminated key figures from Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Elmer, 2011).

Due to this situation, in 2005, Israel unilaterally decided to withdraw its troops from Gaza in an effort to reduce conflict and decrease its military presence in the territory; a move carried out without negotiations with the Palestinian authorities. In August of that year, it dismantled all its military installations and evacuated 25 Israeli settlements, relocating more than 8,000 settlers who had lived there for decades. This withdrawal marked the end of nearly 40 years of military occupation in the area (Anti-Defamation League, 2016; Rynhold & Waxman, 2008).

Ariel Sharon, who was Prime Minister at the time and had previously supported settlement expansion, promoted the withdrawal, arguing that there was no reliable Palestinian partner for peace negotiations. He also believed that the ongoing violent attacks against Israel required strengthened security measures (Anti-Defamation League, 2016). Added to this was the concern over the demographic balance, as it was projected that the Palestinian population would surpass the Jewish population in the territories under Israeli control, and to preserve the Jewish identity of the State of Israel, the withdrawal from Gaza was seen as a necessary step (Rynhold & Waxman, 2008). While it was expected that the Palestinian Authority would take organized control of the territory and use the infrastructure left behind by Israel, such as greenhouses, to strengthen industry and housing in the area, some Palestinian groups entered the former settlements, burned buildings, including synagogues, and looted construction materials and greenhouses (Anti-Defamation League, 2016).

Despite Israel's withdrawal, conditions in Gaza remained a concern for the international community. In 2006, John Dugard, Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Commission, presented a report highlighting ongoing violations of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law by Israel. The Report on the Question of the Violation of Human Rights in the Occupied Arab Territories, including Palestine (2006), stated that although Israel had withdrawn its troops and settlers from Gaza, the occupation persisted due to Israel's control over airspace, maritime access, and borders. The report also noted that Israel continued building the Wall in the West Bank, despite the advisory opinion of the ICJ⁴, which led to humanitarian issues such as restricted access to hospitals, schools, and workplaces, the separation of families, and deteriorating living conditions due to displacement, land confiscation, restricted movement, and limited access to essential resources such as water and electricity. It also stated that nearly 28% of the Palestinian population was unemployed, and almost half lived below the poverty line, with 16% living in extreme poverty (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2006).

Although Israel fully withdrew its troops from Gaza, in 2007, Hamas took control of the territory, representing a new challenge to Israeli security.

2.3.8 Hamas's Victory and the Takeover of Gaza (2006-2007)

After the death of Yasser Arafat in 2004, Mahmoud Abbas assumed the presidency of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 2005, representing the Fatah party. In the January 2006 parliamentary elections, Hamas won 72 out of 134 seats, gaining an absolute majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council (Bartal, 2021; Mendonça Noivo, 2008). Hamas's victory was not solely the result of religious factors; the main reasons were the perception that Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 had been achieved through Palestinian resistance, and the growing discontent with the PNA's corruption, leading the population to believe that Hamas would provide better governance (López Alonso, 2020).

After the elections, the Middle East Quartet⁵ (the U.S., the European Union, the UN, and Russia) imposed three conditions for the international recognition of the new government: Hamas had to recognize Israel, renounce violence, and agree to negotiate a peace agreement. However, the movement rejected these conditions, which triggered economic sanctions (Bartal, 2021; López Alonso, 2020). In response, Israel withheld monthly payments of \$50 to \$60 million that it collected on behalf of the PNA under the Oslo Accords. Additionally, the U.S. and the EU suspended their financial aid to the Palestinian Authority, causing a crisis in which government salaries went unpaid, inflation soared, and public services deteriorated, severely impacting

⁴ In 2002, the Israeli government began the construction of a wall with the purpose of preventing the entry of terrorists. However, in 2004, the ICJ determined that this construction was a violation of International Law and ordered its demolition. Nevertheless, the Israeli government ignored the Resolution and continued with the construction (National Human Rights Commission, 2004).

⁵ The Middle East Quartet was formed in 2002 by the U.S., Russia, the UN, and the EU to facilitate the peace process through a Roadmap based on the two-state solution. Its principles include non-violence, recognition of Israel, and respect for previous agreements (United Nations, n.d.-c).

the population. In this context, Hamas attempted to negotiate a unity government with Fatah, but the talks failed (Bartal, 2021; Mendonça Noivo, 2008).

Tensions between Hamas and Fatah escalated, and despite both factions having their own armed forces, Hamas established the Executive Support Force (ESF) in 2006, a parallel security body intended to consolidate its control over Gaza. In June 2007, Hamas took full control of Gaza through violent clashes that left over 140 people dead (Diker, 2013; Mendonça Noivo, 2008). In response, Abbas declared a state of emergency, deemed the Hamas government illegal, and appointed a new government in the West Bank. Since then, Palestine has been politically divided into two entities: Gaza, under Hamas's control, and the West Bank, governed by Fatah (Bartal, 2021; Mendonça Noivo, 2008).

The internal division between Hamas and Fatah not only weakened Palestinian governance but also contributed to increased violence with Israel. In this context, clashes between Hamas and Israel intensified, leading to the Gaza War of 2008–2009, the first of several conflicts that would occur in the Gaza Strip in the years that followed (López Alonso, 2020).

2.3.9 Gaza Wars (2008-2009, 2012, 2014, 2021)

Since the establishment of separate governments in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the latter has witnessed several violent clashes. Unlike other episodes of the conflict, the wars in Gaza have been marked by the launching of rockets by Palestinian groups, Israeli retaliatory bombings and military incursions, and a worsening humanitarian crisis due to the prolonged blockade on the Strip. This blockade has restricted the entry of essential resources for survival—such as food, medicine, and construction materials—while also limiting access to clean water and electricity. In addition, the blockade has hindered the movement of the population, preventing people with urgent medical needs from receiving treatment outside Gaza. As a result, living conditions in the enclave have severely deteriorated, with high levels of poverty, unemployment, and child malnutrition (Human Rights Watch, 2023; Pons Rafols, 2024). According to Michael Walzer (2002), these wars are attempts by terrorist groups, such as Hamas, to destroy the State of Israel and expel the Jews. The attacks against Israeli civilians demonstrate an intention to achieve victory through the elimination of what they consider the enemy, without the possibility of negotiation. For this reason, Israelis feel threatened, and therefore, the response of the State of Israel can be justified, despite the consequences this has on the Palestinian population (Walzer, 2002).

To understand why Israel suffers fewer civilian casualties despite the number of rockets launched by Hamas—and to highlight the imbalance in military capabilities between Israel and Palestine—it is necessary to mention Israel's missile defense system: the Iron Dome. Designed in 2006 after the war with Lebanon and developed with U.S. technological and financial support, this system is intended to intercept short-range rockets and minimize the impact of attacks on Israeli territory. The Iron Dome, which has a 90% success rate, detects rocket launches, assesses whether they pose a threat to populated areas or infrastructure, and intercepts them if necessary (France 24, 2024b). While this system has significantly reduced damage in Israel by intercepting most rockets before impact, the absence of a similar defense system in Gaza leaves the civilian population vulnerable to Israeli bombings in retaliation. This situation has led the international community to question whether Israeli reprisals are justified or disproportionate. According to IHL, the principle of proportionality must be observed: even if a military target is legitimate, an attack must not be carried out if it is expected to cause excessive harm to civilians and civilian property in relation to the anticipated military advantage (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2012; Golov, 2012). In line with this, it is also important to mention some of Israel's tactics and justifications for its actions. According to Merriam & Schmitt (2015), Israel has on many occasions—especially since 2014—implemented tactics to minimize civilian casualties, such as “roof knocking,” which involves dropping a low-impact projectile to warn of an impending attack. However, these measures were not always effective due to limited mobility within Gaza and the intensity of the fighting. Additionally, Hamas has been accused of violating international law by targeting civilians in Israel and using civilian infrastructure for military purposes, thereby increasing the risk to Gaza's civilian population. For this reason, Israel has justified its attacks by arguing that many facilities in Gaza, such as homes and schools, become legitimate military targets when used by Hamas to store weapons or operate command centers. Finally, both Israel and Hamas have been accused of using human shields during conflicts, further complicating the distinction between military and civilian targets (Merriam & Schmitt, 2015). Even so, the high number of civilian casualties and the destruction of essential infrastructure in Gaza have led many international actors to argue that Israeli actions may violate the IHL principle of proportionality, raising doubts about the sufficiency of Israel's preventive measures.

One of the most devastating episodes occurred on December 27, 2008, when Israel launched Operation Cast Lead against the Gaza Strip, bombing various targets and justifying the attack as an attempt to weaken

Hamas. In response, Hamas launched rockets into Israel. The operation lasted 22 days, during which approximately 1,400 Palestinians were killed—most of them civilians, including 300 children—and thousands were seriously injured. In Israel, 14 people were killed, including 10 soldiers and 4 civilians (Amnesty International, 2009; Norton, 2009). During the offensive, both sides violated IHL. On one hand, Israel was accused of carrying out massive attacks, using prohibited weapons, and employing Palestinian civilians as human shields. On the other hand, Hamas indiscriminately launched rockets into southern Israel, causing civilian casualties and displacement (Amnesty International, 2009).

It is important to note that the blockade imposed by Israel on Gaza in 2007 had already severely deteriorated living conditions in the territory, as restrictions on the entry of goods led to 80% of the population depending on international aid (Norton, 2009). With the new hostilities, the humanitarian situation worsened: in addition to the destruction of homes (leaving thousands homeless during winter), schools, hospitals, and water and electricity networks, the health system collapsed due to the shortage of medical supplies, making it difficult to care for the wounded. On top of this, Israel imposed a total blockade, preventing the entry and exit of people and humanitarian aid. Unlike in Israel, where the population had bunkers for protection, Gaza's inhabitants had no shelters during the bombings, as Israeli restrictions blocked the entry of construction materials (Amnesty International, 2009).

On January 18, 2009, Israel and Hamas each declared a unilateral ceasefire, ending the offensive. However, Gaza's situation was devastating, and the continued Israeli blockade made reconstruction efforts extremely difficult. Faced with the blockade and closed borders, the construction of underground tunnels between Gaza and Egypt became one of the few alternatives for maintaining commerce, employing around 25,000 people (Amnesty International, 2009).

Three years later, on November 14, 2012, Israel launched Operation Pillar of Defense, aimed at deterring Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza. Prior to the attack, Hamas had been launching rockets at Israel, causing injuries. To achieve its objective, Israel launched an airstrike that killed Ahmed Jabari, Hamas' military commander, and damaged the group's military infrastructure (Amnesty International, 2013; Eiland, 2012). This offensive took place in the context of the Arab Spring⁶, during which, according to Golov (2012), Hamas expected greater influence from Islamic movements over Arab governments, potentially provoking mass protests against Israeli actions. However, the response from Arab countries was weaker than expected and did not exert significant pressure on the Israeli government. Furthermore, Israel was in an electoral context, so although it was willing to respond to Hamas' actions, it did so in a limited way so as not to affect its campaign.

Throughout the conflict, both parties were accused of committing war crimes and violations of IHL. Israel bombed residential areas, destroying civilian infrastructure and killing around 150 Palestinians, while Hamas and other armed groups fired over 1,500 unguided rockets into Israel, killing six Israelis (Amnesty International, 2013).

The offensive ended on November 21, 2012, when a ceasefire was agreed. Although Gaza's population suffered damage from the attacks, Israel eased restrictions it had imposed at border crossings. Despite this, challenges such as weapons trafficking from Egypt to Gaza continued, despite efforts to curb smuggling (Eiland, 2012; Golov, 2012). However, the ceasefire failed to guarantee lasting peace. In March 2014, Israel refused to release 26 Palestinian prisoners and announced new settlements in East Jerusalem. In April that year, Fatah and Hamas announced an agreement to form a unity government, which led Israel to suspend peace negotiations, as it opposed a Hamas-led administration (Arosoaie, 2015). In this context of instability, tensions rose in June when three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped and murdered—an act Israel attributed to Hamas—leading to bombings, mass arrests, and the imposition of a curfew. Shortly after, a Palestinian teenager was murdered by Jewish extremists. Hamas responded by launching rockets; escalating the conflict (Fuente Cobo, 2014).

As a result, on July 8, Israel launched Operation Protective Edge, aiming to weaken Hamas and stop missile attacks through air and ground assaults in Gaza. In response, Hamas intensified its rocket attacks (Arosoaie, 2015; Fuente Cobo, 2014). Violence increased when Hamas captured Israeli soldier Hadar Goldin, triggering the implementation of the Hannibal Directive, which allows massive bombings in response to soldier abductions, regardless of the risk to civilians. Israel attacked Rafah on August 1, during the start of a humanitarian pause (Mediavilla, 2016).

This offensive, which lasted 51 days, was the deadliest conflict in Gaza to that point. In Israel, more than 70 people died, including four civilians. In Gaza, over 2,200 Palestinians were killed (75% civilians,

⁶ The Arab Spring was a movement of mass protests in the Middle East and North Africa that began in 2011, demanding reforms and an end to oppression, which led to the overthrow of several authoritarian leaders (Amnesty International, 2016).

including more than 500 children), about half a million people were displaced, and over 100,000 Palestinians were left homeless. The destruction of infrastructure was massive, including schools, hospitals, water networks, and the only power plant (Arosoaie, 2015; López Alonso, 2020; Mediavilla, 2016). Many affected people continue to live in precarious conditions due to Israeli restrictions on the entry of construction materials.

On August 26, 2014, a ceasefire was agreed between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, but not with Hamas. This was due to deteriorating relations between Fatah and Hamas after Abbas condemned the kidnapping of the Israeli teenagers and allowed Israel to act against Hamas members in the West Bank. This deepened the division between both groups, and by October, the unity government dissolved due to the lack of control in Gaza (Arosoaie, 2015; López Alonso, 2020).

By 2017, the situation in the Palestinian territories had continued to deteriorate. According to Cordesman (2021a), there were around 380 Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel was intensifying the demolition of Palestinian homes, Hamas was cracking down on dissent in Gaza through mass arrests, and the Palestinian Authority faced accusations of harassment and operations outside its authorized areas. These tensions accumulated and eventually led to a new escalation of the conflict in 2021.

That year, Gaza faced a severe economic crisis: lacking resources, with a high unemployment rate, 65% of the population under 24 years old, and 43% under 14. Ninety-five percent of the population had no access to clean water; electricity supply was unstable, and nearly half the population depended on international aid, which was, however, insufficient (Cordesman, 2021b). Added to these conditions in Gaza were incidents in East Jerusalem: the threat of Palestinian families being evicted, ultranationalist Israeli marches before and during Jerusalem Day (which Arabs consider a celebration of the Occupation), and police intimidation and repression of Palestinians in mosques, especially during the holy month of Ramadan⁷. Prior to the escalation, Hamas had sent warnings about Israeli violence but received no response from Israel (International Crisis Group, 2021).

In this context, on May 10, 2021, Hamas launched over 1,000 rockets at Israel, provoking an intense military response through Operation Guardian of the Walls, during which Israel carried out airstrikes on Gaza, triggering an 11-day conflict (Cordesman, 2021b; International Crisis Group, 2021). As a result, a large number of buildings were destroyed, including hospitals and schools, and the Palestinian population suffered constant disruptions in basic services like water and electricity. In Israel, various protests took place. These included demonstrations against the Israeli government's military actions in Gaza, violence in East Jerusalem, and internal repression of Palestinians. In response, Israeli police repressed protests with tear gas and stun grenades. Additionally, following the killing of a Palestinian resident by a Jewish Israeli, groups began attacking one another, setting fire to synagogues and mosques and destroying property. Clashes extended to the West Bank, where over 80 demonstrations were recorded. In response, Israeli forces killed 15 protesters and injured over 1,700 (International Crisis Group, 2021). Finally, on May 21, both parties agreed to a ceasefire.

However, the conflict once again demonstrated that a ceasefire was not a guarantee of a lasting solution. While Hamas strengthened its image as a defender of the Palestinian cause, the Palestinian Authority lost credibility among the population for failing to achieve a peace agreement (Cordesman, 2021b). In this way, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued to evolve, with recurring tensions between the parties. The fragility of ceasefire agreements and the international community's inability to enforce lasting peace led to the escalation of violence in October 2023.

2.3.10 October 2023 Conflict

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a large-scale attack against southern Israel, which was carried out in a short period of time, overwhelming the Israeli security system. The offensive began with the launch of missiles (more than 3,000 in the first few hours) and continued with the infiltration of approximately 2,000 Hamas members into more than 20 locations in Israel. The Hamas attack included killings, kidnappings, and armed clashes in civilian communities such as Sderot, Be'eri, and the Re'im music festival. Around 1,200 people were killed, including women, children, and the elderly, and approximately 240 people were taken hostage and transported to the Gaza Strip (Dieckhof, 2023). This represented the highest number of deaths in a single day on Israeli territory since the creation of the State in 1948, causing collective trauma and raising questions about the effectiveness of the defense system to protect the population (Dieckhof, 2023). In response, Israel declared war on Hamas, initiating airstrikes on Gaza and later a ground invasion. In reaction to this, various international organizations have pointed out that Israeli military operations have not made a clear distinction between military and civilian targets, resulting in massive destruction of infrastructure and a high

⁷ Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, a sacred period of fasting during which Muslims abstain from eating and drinking, including water, from dawn until sunset. It is a time of spiritual reflection, prayer, and solidarity with those in need (CNN, 2024).

number of civilian casualties (BBC, 2025; Las Heras, 2024). Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu justified the offensive with three main objectives: to eliminate Hamas, to recover the hostages, and to ensure Israel's security (BBC, 2025). Additionally, Israel aimed to deter other regional actors with whom it has had historical tensions, such as groups in Lebanon or Iran, from intervening in the conflict, in order to prevent a regional escalation (Dieckhof, 2023).

On the other hand, Hamas argued that the attack was a response to a context of occupation and repression, influenced by the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the blockade on Gaza, the demolition of Palestinian homes, and mobility restrictions (Aguirre, 2024). Furthermore, the negotiations between Israel and Saudi Arabia to normalize diplomatic relations were perceived by Hamas as a threat to its support in the Arab world. Likewise, failures in the Israeli security system allowed the attack to unfold without an immediate response (Morillo, 2024; Primicias, 2023). In the following days, support for the war was high: 63% of Israeli Jews believed the offensive should eliminate Hamas, while 58% felt that the army had used insufficient firepower (Dieckhof, 2023).

However, the escalation of the conflict triggered a severe humanitarian crisis. By March 2024, over 40,000 Palestinians had died, and 1.9 million people had been displaced, many without access to clean water, food, or medical care. Gaza was left devastated, including areas declared safe, such as Rafah. About 22% of the population was at risk of starvation, and the healthcare system collapsed due to the destruction of hospitals and the shortage of medical supplies. Legally, in January 2024, the ICJ declared admissible the genocide accusations filed by South Africa against Israel⁸ and ruled against the occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. Moreover, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants against Netanyahu, the previous Defense Minister, Yoav Gallant, and three Hamas leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity (Kopel, 2024).

Furthermore, the humanitarian crisis continues to this day. On March 10, 2025, UNRWA (2025) reported that at least 48,405 people had died and 111,835 had been injured since the beginning of the conflict, while 90% of the population had suffered forced displacement. Humanitarian aid remains insufficient: although 2,300 trucks carrying essential supplies have entered, they are not enough to meet the needs of the entire population. Malnutrition is alarming, especially among children and pregnant women. In response, educational and psychosocial support programs have been implemented, benefiting more than 730,000 people, including 520,000 children (UNRWA Spain, 2025).

Amid growing international pressure, a ceasefire agreement was approved on January 15, 2025, mediated by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States, and entered into force on January 19. Initially, three phases were established: the first included the release of hostages and prisoners, the entry of humanitarian aid, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from populated areas, and the return of displaced Palestinians to their homes; the second phase—which was never implemented—included a permanent ceasefire and the release of the remaining hostages and prisoners; and the third phase involved the return of the bodies of deceased hostages and the reconstruction of Gaza. Although negotiations were expected to progress to the following phases, on March 18, Israel launched a new wave of airstrikes on Gaza, claiming they were aimed at Hamas targets, which stalled the talks (Berg, 2025; France 24, 2025). The magnitude of the crisis has intensified international calls for a definitive political solution, including the consolidation of the recognition of Palestine as a State within the international community.

2.4 International Recognition of Palestine

The status of Palestine as a state remains a subject of debate in international relations. According to Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933), in order to be considered a state, four essential elements must be fulfilled: a permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other States.

According to Dahiya (2023), although the Montevideo Convention has a regional origin, it has become a widely accepted framework for defining statehood criteria at the international level. In his analysis, Dahiya applies the Convention's elements to the case of Palestine. First, regarding the defined territory, Palestine has a clearly demarcated territory, although some areas are disputed. According to the Montevideo Convention, territorial disputes do not prevent Palestine from being considered a state—just as Israel was admitted to the

⁸ On December 29, 2023, South Africa filed a case against Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), alleging violations of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in Gaza. It argued that Israel has committed genocidal acts against the Palestinian people, including killings, serious bodily and mental harm, conditions of life intended to bring about their destruction, and restrictions on access to essential goods such as food, water, and medical assistance (Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel), 2024).

UN despite its own territorial conflicts with several Arab countries. Second, in terms of a permanent population, although a significant portion of the Palestinian population resides outside its territory, there is a stable population within its borders. Third, regarding government, even though Palestine is politically divided between Gaza and the West Bank, the Convention does not require a centralized or fully functional government for a state to be recognized. Lastly, concerning the capacity to enter into international relations, Palestine has maintained diplomatic ties with numerous countries, despite lacking universal recognition (Dahiya, 2023).

Although Palestine meets the criteria established by the Convention, its status remains controversial in the international arena, complicating its admission as a full member of the United Nations. This is because full membership requires the approval of the Security Council, where countries such as the United States have used their veto power against resolutions supporting Palestine's admission. As a result, Palestine remains a Non-Member Observer State at the UN (United Nations, 2024). In November 2012, the General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/67/19, granting Palestine the status of a non-member observer state of the UN—a status currently held only by Palestine and the Holy See. This marked a significant step toward international recognition. Moreover, in that same resolution, the General Assembly urged the Security Council to favorably consider the application submitted by Palestine in September 2011 for full membership (United Nations General Assembly, 2012). The General Assembly establishes that observer status may be granted to states and intergovernmental organizations whose activities relate to issues of interest to the Assembly, such as human rights, justice and international law, peace and security, refugees, humanitarian crises, etc. (Dag Hammarskjöld Library, n.d.; United Nations, n.d.-b). Although non-member observer states do not enjoy all the rights of full member states, this status allows them to participate in debates, submit resolutions, and join international treaties (Duarte Herrera & Miramontes Romero, 2020). For example, in April 2015, Palestine became the 123rd state to accede to the ICC (Coalition for the International Criminal Court, 2015), which means that the ICC has jurisdiction over its territory and can investigate allegations of international crimes committed throughout Palestinian territory, including Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem (International Federation for Human Rights, 2021). This access to international treaties strengthens the argument that, although Palestine's recognition as a state remains debated in the international community, its capacity to act within the human rights system is increasingly consolidated. Nonetheless, Palestine still faces obstacles in obtaining full UN membership. In April 2024, Palestine once again requested admission as a member state, but the United States vetoed the proposal in the Security Council, stating that the creation of a Palestinian state must be achieved through direct negotiations with Israel, and questioning whether Palestine meets the criteria for statehood due to Hamas's influence in Gaza, which affects political stability (United Nations Security Council, n.d.-d).

In May 2024, during an emergency session, the General Assembly expanded Palestine's participation rights at the UN through Resolution A/RES/ES-10/23. This resolution allowed Palestine to be listed as a speaker in general debates, submit proposals and amendments, and join General Assembly committees, among other rights. However, Palestine still cannot vote in the Assembly or submit candidacies to UN bodies (United Nations General Assembly, 2024). Despite advances in participation, Palestine's full integration as a member state remains a challenge due to the lack of international consensus.

As of today, 147 of the 193 UN member states recognize Palestine as a state, particularly in the Middle East, Latin America, Asia, and Africa. In 1988, Algeria became the first country to officially recognize Palestine after its declaration of independence, followed by several Arab states (France 24, 2024a). However, while countries as China, Russia, Spain, Norway, Mexico, and Brazil recognize Palestine, others such as the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, and several Western European countries have argued that recognition should be the outcome of a negotiated agreement with Israel rather than a unilateral decision (Ghaedi, 2024). The absence of a final agreement on borders, security, and refugee rights has hindered full recognition of Palestine by certain international actors. In addition, the role of the United States and its support for Israel have stalled initiatives (Duarte Herrera & Miramontes Romero, 2020).

2.5 United States Support for Israel

Over the years, the United States has supported Israel both politically and militarily. It was the first country to recognize its existence, just minutes after its declaration as a state in 1948 (García Encina, 2023). According to Izquierdo Brichs (2003), the Middle East has long been a region of significant interest to the United States, mainly due to access to oil and its geopolitical importance. During the Cold War, competition with the USSR and the control of energy resources led the U.S. to strengthen its presence in the region by establishing military bases and forging alliances with Arab countries. Additionally, following the September 11, 2001 attacks, the perception that alliances with Arab states were fragile grew stronger, while the U.S. relationship with Israel was seen as reinforced by a shared identity.

In 2017, during Donald Trump's first administration, the United States recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moved its embassy to the city (Cordesman, 2021a). This move was highly controversial, as Jerusalem is a sacred place for both Israelis and Palestinians and has long been a central issue in the conflict. The embassy relocation jeopardized peace agreements and heightened tensions in the region, raising fears of a new intifada (BBC World, 2017). Later, during Joe Biden's presidency, the October 2023 conflict broke out. Initially, the U.S. supported Israel, vetoing ceasefire resolutions in the Security Council and prioritizing the release of hostages over a truce. However, as the humanitarian crisis in Gaza worsened, by March 2024, the Biden administration began promoting a ceasefire and facilitating humanitarian aid operations—airdropping supplies and building a temporary port in Gaza—while Secretary of State Tony Blinken intensified diplomatic efforts in the Middle East. Nevertheless, negotiations for a hostage-prisoner exchange between Israel and Hamas stalled.

In April 2024, following a direct attack by Iran on Israel, the U.S. approved a \$26 billion security aid package for Israel (Ji-Hyang, 2024). However, this move also drew criticism, particularly concerning potential human rights violations and questions about whether the U.S. should be funding a developed country like Israel (García Encina, 2023).

One of the main forms of U.S. support for Israel is through Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), bilateral agreements that outline the annual military assistance provided by the U.S. to Israel to ensure it maintains a qualitative military edge over potential threats. This includes the purchase of advanced weaponry and cooperation in research and development of defense systems such as the Iron Dome. The first MoU was signed in 1983 and has been renewed multiple times to ensure continued support (United States Department of State, 2025). The current MoU was signed in 2016 under the Obama administration and guarantees \$38 billion in aid for the 2019–2028 period, consisting of \$3.3 billion annually in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and \$500 million annually for missile defense (Nagel, 2020). Additionally, according to a report by the Watson Institute at Brown University, from the start of the conflict on October 7, 2023, to October 2024, the U.S. had provided approximately \$17.9 billion in military aid to Israel through FMF, missile defense systems, and replenishment of weaponry transferred to Israel. This has been widely criticized due to the humanitarian impact of the conflict (Tarhan, 2024).

Despite this, on February 28, 2025, the United States approved a new arms sale to Israel worth \$3 billion for military equipment and weapons. While deliveries are expected in 2026, there is a possibility of expedited shipments (Deutsche Welle, 2025). In addition to political, military, and financial support, the United States has protected Israel within the United Nations Security Council, where its veto power has been used to block resolutions that are critical of the Israeli State (Hatuel-Radoshitzky, 2018).

3. Methods

This research adopted a qualitative and descriptive approach, as it sought to characterize the impact of the right of veto on the humanitarian crisis of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. According to Tinto Arandes (2013), descriptive research allows for the systematization of data from different secondary sources, organizing it in a comprehensible manner to facilitate analysis. Moreover, this methodology allows for delimiting, ordering, and classifying the phenomenon under study, providing a detailed view of it. To this end, two main methods were employed: literature review and document analysis. In this study, the literature review was used to analyze the fundamental concepts that support the research, including the creation of the United Nations, the functioning of the Security Council, International Humanitarian Law, the use of the right of veto, and the main criticisms of both the veto and the structure of the Security Council. It was also used to examine the historical background of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, from the creation of the State of Israel to the escalation of violence in October 2023, in order to understand the context in which the most recent vetoes occurred. On the other hand, the document analysis focused on reviewing the vetoed resolutions in the United Nations Security Council since October 2023, paying special attention to the objective of each resolution before being vetoed, the country that issued the veto and its justification, and reports from international organizations that have documented the evolution of the humanitarian crisis. For data collection, secondary sources were used, such as academic documents and research obtained from databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and Dialnet; draft resolutions and session records of the UN Security Council; official press releases from the United Nations; and reports from international organizations such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and Amnesty International.

As for the study universe, all vetoes presented by the permanent members of the Security Council related to the Palestinian issue have been considered. However, the sample was limited to vetoes issued since October 2023, as they mark the beginning of the current escalation of the conflict. The vetoes analyzed are presented in Table 1:

Table 1
Vetoes in the Security Council related to the Palestinian question, since October 2023

Veto Date	Vetoed Resolution Topic	Country Issuing the Veto
October 18, 2023	The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question	United States
October 25, 2023	The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question	China and Russia
December 8, 2023	The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question	United States
February 20, 2024	The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question	United States
March 22, 2024	The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question	China and Russia
April 18, 2024	Admission of new members	United States
November 20, 2024	The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question	United States

Through the literature review and document analysis, the impact of the right of veto on the Palestinian humanitarian crisis could be comprehensively addressed. The literature review provided the theoretical and contextual foundations, while the document analysis allowed for reviewing the vetoed resolutions and their humanitarian implications, enabling the identification of patterns in the use of the veto, international responses, and the consequences on access to humanitarian aid, as well as efforts to achieve a resolution to the conflict.

4. Results

Since the attacks on October 7, 2023, the consequences in Gaza quickly worsened. As of October 17, approximately 3,000 people had been reported dead and 12,500 injured in Gaza, while in Israel, the death toll reached 1,300 people with 4,229 injured. Additionally, it was estimated that Palestinian armed groups were holding approximately 250 people hostage (Congressional Research Service, 2023). However, these figures did not account for the hundreds of people trapped under the rubble. The number of displaced people in Gaza had also risen to one million, a figure that increased following an order issued by the IDF on October 13, demanding that civilians evacuate northern Gaza and move south within 24 hours, citing safety and protection reasons (Congressional Research Service, 2023). Nevertheless, this forced evacuation did not guarantee the population's safety, as on October 17, one of the deadliest days, southern cities like Rafah and Khan Yunis were also attacked (Pérez Gallardo, 2023; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023), and a large number of victims were people who had evacuated or were already displaced (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023).

October 17 marked one week since the total blackout in Gaza, after Israel cut off electricity and fuel supplies, causing the shutdown of the territory's only power plant. Israel justified this measure by stating that services would be restored once the hostages were released. On October 17, the WHO managed to supply fuel to Gaza's largest hospital, although the rest of the hospitals continued operating at minimum capacity (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023).

Meanwhile, the World Food Programme (WFP) had indicated that essential food reserves would last for two weeks, while stores were nearly out of stock. Furthermore, the lack of fuel and the blackout affected refrigeration, irrigation, and crop incubation systems, impacting the production of several essential goods. Added to this was the paralysis of water transportation due to a lack of fuel and blocked roads caused by debris. Most people had no access to water, and average consumption dropped to three liters per person per day. As a result, the population had to consume water extracted from agricultural wells, which had been exposed to various chemicals, increasing the risk of death or infection (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023).

Regarding destroyed civilian infrastructure, as of October 14, 8,840 homes had been destroyed and another 5,434 were uninhabitable due to damage; attacks also hit 176 educational centers, including a bombing on a UNRWA school in Gaza that was sheltering 4,000 displaced people, and 57 health sector facilities (Congressional Research Service, 2023). Israel justified these attacks and restrictions by claiming that Hamas used civilian facilities for military purposes: according to IDF intelligence, Hamas allegedly used Sheikh Hamad Hospital and Shifa Hospital as entry points to a tunnel network, as bases of operations, and to steal fuel from hospitals for terrorist purposes (Fabian, 2023).

In terms of mobility, since October 7, patient referrals to the West Bank were suspended, and Gaza residents working in Israel were unable to return home. Additionally, the Rafah crossing (border between Gaza and Egypt) remained closed, and despite Egypt's willingness to use the crossing to open a humanitarian corridor and allow the safe exit of civilians and the entry of humanitarian aid, Israeli bombings in the area continued (Congressional Research Service, 2023; Pérez Gallardo, 2023; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023).

In light of this situation and given that clashes were also taking place in the West Bank between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers and settlers, Palestinian Authority President Abbas criticized Israel's actions but also reaffirmed that the PLO is the sole representative of the Palestinian people. Despite this, Palestinian armed groups continued launching rockets at Israeli population centers in response to the occupation and aggression against Palestinian civilians, although no new deaths were reported (DW, 2023; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023a).

Draft Resolution S/2023/773 – October 18, 2023

To address the humanitarian crisis, on October 18, 2023, Brazil submitted a draft resolution to the Security Council. The document aimed to condemn all acts of violence and terrorism, especially those perpetrated by Hamas on October 7; demand the release of hostages; urge compliance with IHL, particularly regarding the conduct of hostilities and the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure; ensure access to essential services such as electricity, fuel, water, food, and medical supplies; request the revocation of the evacuation order for civilians in northern Gaza; allow humanitarian pauses so that humanitarian agencies could enter and deliver aid; and prevent the escalation of the conflict in the region (United Nations Security Council, 2023a).

During the vote, Russia's representative stated that the Security Council's inaction was alarming and noted that, since the draft did not include a ceasefire, the proposed humanitarian pauses would not stop the war. For this reason, Russia proposed two amendments: one to condemn indiscriminate attacks against civilians in Gaza and another to request a ceasefire. However, neither amendment obtained the required majority and was, therefore, rejected (United Nations Security Council, 2023f).

The draft was then put to a vote. The countries that voted in favor were Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Switzerland, and the United Arab Emirates. The United States voted against, while Russia and the United Kingdom abstained. Due to the U.S. veto, the draft resolution was not adopted. Following the result, Russia's representative accused the U.S. of lacking interest in passing a humanitarian resolution and cited Lockheed Martin CEO James Taiclet, who had told the media the day before that Israel's military actions should not be restrained and that some conflicts must be resolved through the use of force, for which his company was willing to provide weapons (United Nations Security Council, 2023f).

For her part, the U.S. representative justified the veto by stating that, at that time, President Joe Biden was in Israel addressing the hostage situation and the humanitarian response, with the goal of enabling the immediate delivery of aid to Gaza. She also noted that the draft did not refer to Israel's right to self-defense and that Hamas's actions triggered the humanitarian crisis, so all states should condemn terrorism and demand an end to attacks against Israel. The U.K. representative also expressed concern over the lack of reference to Israel's right to self-defense and the use of civilians as human shields by Hamas (United Nations Security Council, 2023f).

Meanwhile, the representatives of Switzerland and Gabon condemned the attacks against Israel and expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in Gaza. They acknowledged Israel's right to defend itself but emphasized that such defense must comply with IHL, especially regarding the principles of proportionality and distinction between civilians and combatants. Finally, the representative of the United Arab Emirates acknowledged that Hamas was responsible for the latest escalation of the conflict but also highlighted that the root causes are not recent, but the result of decades of dehumanization, violence, despair, and occupation (United Nations Security Council, 2023f).

A few hours after the vote, Biden announced \$100 million in U.S. humanitarian assistance for the people of Gaza and the West Bank (Congressional Research Service, 2023). Two days later, on October 20, the first 20 trucks carrying humanitarian aid began entering Gaza through the border with Egypt. However, this was not enough to meet the population's needs (Pérez Gallardo, 2023).

As of October 25, 1,200 deaths and 5,431 injuries had been reported in Israel, and 6,547 deaths and 17,439 injuries in Gaza, of which 68% were women and children. Additionally, 1,600 people had been reported missing, and around 150 Palestinian families had lost ten or more members. The number of displaced people in Gaza had reached 1.4 million, many of whom lived in overcrowded shelters that were 2.7 times over capacity. Of these, 629,000 were staying in 150 UNRWA centers, 121,000 in hospitals, churches, and schools, and approximately 700,000 with host families. However, around 30,000 displaced people were forced to return to the north due to continued attacks in the south, meaning there were no safe shelters (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023b).

Despite the opening of the Rafah crossing, which allowed approximately 60 trucks with food, water, and medical supplies to enter, the WFP estimated that food reserves would last 12 days, and some available

items like rice or lentils could not be cooked due to the lack of water and fuel. This led many displaced people to decide to eat only once a day to survive the food shortage. Food insecurity also posed a serious risk of malnutrition, especially for women and children. The supply of drinking water was made possible by UNRWA desalination units, although they were expected to stop functioning within days due to fuel shortages, as Israel continued to prohibit fuel entry. In this regard, UNRWA warned that its fuel reserves would run out in three days, which would force a drastic reduction in its operations (UN Sustainable Development Group, 2023; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023b).

Simultaneously, attacks on civilian infrastructure continued: 45% of homes in Gaza had been destroyed or damaged; 219 educational centers had been attacked, 8 of which were being used as emergency shelters for displaced persons, along with 35 health centers, worsening the situation given that more than one third of hospitals and clinics had ceased to function due to damage and lack of personnel, fuel, electricity, and water (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023b).

On the other hand, as of October 21, Palestinian armed groups had launched 550 rockets against Israel, some of which landed inside or near Gaza, causing the deaths of Palestinian civilians, with no Israeli fatalities reported. On October 24, Israel carried out its most intense bombardments, with the highest number of casualties recorded. One of the deadliest attacks was the destruction of the At Taj residential building in Gaza, where 40 people were killed. According to the Israeli army, the attacks were aimed at Hamas underground military facilities, and since civilian infrastructure concealed military operations, distinguishing between civilian and military targets was more difficult. At that time, the number of Israeli and foreign civilians held captive in Gaza was approximately 212 people, for which United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres urged Hamas to release them immediately (UN Sustainable Development Group, 2023). On October 25, the Israeli army demanded the evacuation of 40,000 people from southern Gaza toward the west, even though that area no longer had shelter capacity (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023b).

Draft Resolution S/2023/792, 25 October 2023

Due to the continuation of the conflict, on October 25, 2023, the United States proposed a new draft resolution. Stating that Hamas and other terrorist groups do not represent the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, the draft rejected and condemned the attacks of October 7 against Israel and reaffirmed the right of States to self-defense, in accordance with IHL. It also condemned all acts of violence and hostilities against civilians, as well as acts of destruction carried out by Hamas, such as the use of civilians as human shields, and demanded the immediate release of hostages. Furthermore, it called for the establishment of humanitarian pauses to allow the immediate access of humanitarian aid, especially services such as water, electricity, fuel, food, and medical supplies. Regarding IHL, it urged all parties to respect it, especially by avoiding damage to objects necessary for the provision of essential services. Finally, it called on States to suppress the financing of terrorist groups and emphasized that a lasting peace can only be achieved through mutual recognition, respect for human rights, and the end of violence; therefore, it urged the resumption of negotiations between the parties (United Nations Security Council, 2023b).

During the vote on the draft, the United States representative stated that, thanks to diplomatic efforts, humanitarian aid had begun to arrive in Gaza, but it was still insufficient. She also highlighted that the draft condemned the attacks by Hamas and affirmed the right of States to defend themselves against the threats to peace and security posed by such attacks. For his part, the Russian representative expressed opposition to the draft, as it did not demand a ceasefire nor did it condemn the attacks on the civilian population and infrastructure in Gaza. He added that the draft was not intended to save civilians but rather to protect the interests of the United States in the region. He further argued that the right to self-defense does not apply in the case of an occupying power, such as Israel in Palestine (United Nations Security Council, 2023g). As a result, the draft received votes in favor from Albania, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States; votes against from China, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates; and abstentions from Brazil and Mozambique (United Nations Security Council, 2023g).

Following the veto, the Chinese representative stated that the document did not call for a ceasefire, a necessary element to resolve the issue. He added that the draft would have prolonged the war by justifying the use of force, and that it did not demand that Israel lift the blockade on Gaza or revoke the evacuation order for the north. Finally, China expressed that while it does not deny Israel's security concerns, Palestine also has the same rights and concerns. The document, however, did not acknowledge that the Palestinian territories have been under long-standing occupation and failed to address the creation of an independent Palestinian state. On the other hand, the representatives of Albania and Ecuador stated that although the draft resolution was not perfect, it was necessary to address critical issues such as the protection of civilians and ensuring humanitarian

aid. Ecuador reinforced the idea that States have the right to self-defense, but in compliance with IHL (United Nations Security Council, 2023g).

In the following weeks, Israeli attacks on Gaza continued, as did rocket launches from Gaza towards Israel. However, on November 15, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2712 (2023). This resolution rejected forced displacement, the disruption of basic services, and above all, sought the protection of civilians, especially children, during the conflict. Thus, it demanded respect for IHL, the establishment of humanitarian pauses to ensure rapid and unimpeded access to humanitarian aid, and the release of hostages held by Hamas and other groups (United Nations Security Council, 2023d). The resolution was adopted with 12 votes in favor and 3 abstentions (Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States). During the vote, the Palestinian representative expressed gratitude for the adoption of the resolution, although he pointed out that the text did not mention Israeli attacks on civilians or civilian infrastructure, nor did it call for the release of Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons. The Israeli representative thanked the Council for demanding the release of hostages but criticized the resolution for failing to condemn the October 7 Hamas attacks. He added that Israel was responding to those attacks to defend its security (United Nations Security Council, 2023h). He also stated that Israel respects international law, and that it is Hamas who seeks to “intensify and worsen the humanitarian situation in Gaza in order to communicate to the world that Palestinians are suffering and thereby exploit this very body to tie Israel’s hands” (United Nations Security Council, 2023h, p. 16).

On November 24, days after the humanitarian pause, a ceasefire agreement came into effect in Gaza. The agreement, brokered by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States, aimed to secure the release of hostages and Palestinian detainees (UN News, 2023a). During the seven-day truce, Hamas released 108 Israelis in exchange for 240 Palestinians, most of them minors. However, on December 1, Israel resumed attacks on Gaza, arguing that Hamas had launched rockets against Israel, thus violating the terms of the agreement. Additionally, the Israeli government reaffirmed that its objectives remained the release of hostages, the elimination of Hamas as a military threat, and the assurance that Gaza would no longer pose a danger to Israelis. Hamas, for its part, blamed Israel for not allowing fuel into the territory, which also constituted a violation of the agreement (CNN, 2023; Santana, 2023). In an effort to reduce civilian casualties following the renewed offensive, on December 1, the IDF published a map dividing the Gaza Strip into various areas, aiming to indicate which zones would be attacked and thus allow for the evacuation of the population. However, disruptions in telecommunications and the lack of electricity to charge devices affected access to this information (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023c).

With the resumption of the attacks, the humanitarian situation worsened significantly: in early December, the death toll in Israel remained at approximately 1,200 people, while in Gaza the figure rose to 17,487 dead (70% women and children) and 46,480 injured; since the resumption of attacks, 1,827 deaths and 7,049 injuries were reported (World Health Organization, 2023). Around 1.9 million people—85% of the population—were displaced, with 1.2 million seeking refuge in 156 UNRWA facilities, which exceeded their capacity by more than fourfold (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023c; World Health Organization, 2023). Moreover, starting December 3, thousands of displaced people moved to the city of Rafah, due to IDF evacuation orders and continued attacks. There, overcrowding conditions were extreme, with no empty spaces left for shelter and urgent needs for food, medical care, and shelter. Additionally, 36% of households experienced severe hunger, 91% of households went to bed hungry, and 63% had gone days without eating. The situation in the north was worse: due to fuel shortages, residents relied on dirtier sources such as burning waste, increasing the risk of respiratory diseases (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023c). Access to water in northern Gaza was nearly non-existent, as the fuel shortage forced pumping stations to halt operations. As a result, people were compelled to drink from unsafe sources contaminated by sewage flowing through the streets (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023c). In Gaza, each person had access to only one or two liters of water per day for all needs, whereas in any refugee camp, each person would typically have access to seven liters of water per day (UN News, 2023b). UNRWA, for its part, continued to exploit water wells to supply potable and domestic water, benefiting shelters in Rafah (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023c).

In terms of healthcare, overcrowding in shelters led to an increase in illnesses such as diarrhea, respiratory infections, and skin diseases. Additionally, in Rafah, the lack of toilets for the displaced increased open defecation, which raised the risk of disease spread due to rain and flooding. Only 39% of hospitals were operational, with an occupancy rate of 262% (World Health Organization, 2023). In the south, one of the largest hospitals reported a severe shortage of medicines and medical supplies; besides treating more patients than its normal capacity, it was also sheltering 70,000 internally displaced persons, while fuel for hospital operations was being rationed (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023c).

In northern Gaza, it was reported that the IDF detained hundreds of people in public places or shelters for the displaced, stripped them of their clothing, subjected them to beatings and harassment, and denied them access to basic services. Those suspected of ties to Hamas were transferred to Israel for interrogation, while the rest were released (UN News, 2023c). In the West Bank, unrest continued, and on December 8, during an operation in a refugee camp, the IDF shot and killed six Palestinians, including a child. This raised the number of deaths in the West Bank to 263 people (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023c).

Finally, in terms of humanitarian aid, 33% of the \$1.2 billion requested to assist 2.2 million people in the Gaza Strip and 500,000 in the West Bank had been raised. Around 10,000 hygiene kits were distributed to displaced people in the north, 40,000 medical consultations were carried out, and UNICEF provided anemia treatment to more than 33,300 pregnant and breastfeeding women (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023c). Additionally, an average of 150,000 liters of fuel per day began entering from Egypt, although this represented only the minimum required to prevent essential services from collapsing (UN News, 2023c). However, these efforts did not meet all the population's needs.

Draft Resolution S/2023/970, December 8, 2023

On December 8, 2023, the United Arab Emirates presented a new draft resolution, co-sponsored by around 100 countries, including Russia, China, Brazil, Mexico, Spain, and Belgium. The text expressed deep concern over the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the suffering of the civilian population; therefore, it called for an immediate ceasefire, compliance with IHL—particularly regarding the protection of civilians—the release of hostages, and humanitarian access (United Nations Security Council, 2023c).

Before the vote, the Permanent Observer of Palestine was invited. The UAE representative stated that after 63 days of conflict, the only thing left to do was to demand an end to the war, in order to save as many lives as possible, adding that Resolution 2712 (2023) had been important, but not sufficient. For his part, the Russian representative expressed the Council's inability to maintain international peace and security and blamed this on the United States, claiming it sought to shield its ally by preventing the Council from intervening. He also questioned how the U.S. would explain its actions—hindering a ceasefire—to parts of its population demonstrating in support of Palestine (United Nations Security Council, 2023h). The draft was put to a vote: those voting in favor were Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Russia, Switzerland, and the United Arab Emirates; those voting against were the United States; and the United Kingdom abstained (United Nations Security Council, 2023h).

The U.S. representative justified the veto by arguing that its recommendations had not been taken into account, and that the draft would not have changed the situation. He added that the document did not condemn Hamas's attacks, which included acts of sexual and gender-based violence; that it did not call for medical assistance to be provided to the hostages; that it did not promote the resumption of humanitarian pauses to release the hostages; and that it did not acknowledge Israel's right to self-defense. He also argued that demanding a ceasefire would be dangerous, as it would allow Hamas to repeat the October 7 attacks. Finally, he stated that the United States would continue its diplomatic efforts to expand humanitarian aid and achieve peace and security. The UK representative declared that she could not vote in favor of a resolution that did not condemn Hamas's attacks, and that by calling for a ceasefire, these acts were being ignored; she also added that Israel must address the threats posed by Hamas while respecting IHL (United Nations Security Council, 2023h).

The Maltese representative, on the other hand, stated that while acknowledging Israel's right to protect its population, such action must comply with IHL, especially the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution. She also referenced the Secretary-General's letter to the Security Council invoking Article 99 of the UN Charter⁹, expressing that the situation in Gaza was unsustainable and the suffering immeasurable. China, for its part, stated that it was contradictory to allow hostilities to continue while expressing concern for the lives and needs of the people in Gaza. For this reason, it urged Israel to end the collective punishment imposed on the Gaza population. Lastly, the Palestinian representative stated that as a result of blocking the resolution, hundreds of people would die, become orphaned, wounded, or disabled. He concluded by thanking the countries that co-sponsored the document and those that voted in favor and demanded a ceasefire (United Nations Security Council, 2023h).

Although this draft resolution was not adopted, on December 22, the Security Council approved Resolution 2720 (2023), which, recalling the demands established in Resolution 2712 (2023), required that

⁹ Under Article 99 of the United Nations Charter, the Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security (Charter of the United Nations, 1945).

immediate, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access be guaranteed to the population in Gaza, as well as the opening of border crossings; requested the appointment of a UN Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator to coordinate and verify aid delivery through countries not directly involved in the conflict; demanded respect for IHL; called for the immediate release of hostages; and reiterated the international commitment to achieving the two-state solution (United Nations Security Council, 2023e). The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favor and two abstentions (Russia and the United States). The Palestinian representative welcomed the adoption of the resolution, as it would allow humanitarian aid to reach the people in Gaza, although he stressed the need to establish a ceasefire. The Israeli representative noted that as of that date, the Security Council had not condemned Hamas's attacks of October 7 and expressed concern for the hostages still held captive. He also reaffirmed the need to dismantle Hamas, arguing that the group continued building tunnels that could endanger Israel's security (United Nations Security Council, 2023j).

Although this resolution allowed humanitarian aid to enter, by not demanding a ceasefire, the humanitarian crisis continued: as of February 20, 29,195 deaths and 69,170 people wounded had been reported; more than 1.7 million people had been displaced—i.e., 75% of the population—many of them sheltered in UNRWA facilities and other public shelters (World Health Organization, 2024a). Rafah became one of the main concentration points, with over 1.5 million people in the area, more than six times its population before October 7, raising fears of a potential collapse of humanitarian operations (UNRWA, 2024a). The situation also worsened in the West Bank, as since October 7, 524 people, including 256 children, were displaced due to the demolition of homes in Area C and East Jerusalem, caused by the inability to obtain construction permits (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024a).

The food situation in Gaza reached catastrophic levels, with approximately 2.2 million people at risk of famine and 378,000 in extreme conditions, facing starvation and the depletion of their coping mechanisms (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024d). The most critical situation occurred in Gaza, where one in six children under two years of age suffered from acute malnutrition, and 3% from severe malnutrition. The suspension of food aid deliveries by WFP further worsened access to food (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024a). The situation was compounded by the lack of potable water due to IDF attacks on the central Gaza desalination plant, which was destroyed, leaving thousands of people with limited access to safe water (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024a).

In terms of infrastructure damage, the attacks destroyed over 70,000 homes and partially damaged another 290,000 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024d). Schools were also affected, with nearly 80% of school buildings damaged, leaving over 625,000 students and 23,000 teachers without access to education or safe spaces (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024a). Hospital infrastructure was also on the brink of collapse. Only 33% of hospitals were operational, with bed occupancy reaching 349%. In Rafah, hospitals were overwhelmed; one became completely inoperative, with no water or electricity (World Health Organization, 2024a). The humanitarian crisis was also reflected in cases such as the death of five ICU patients due to lack of oxygen, over 330,000 cases of acute respiratory infections, and the complete shortage of medicines, food, and basic services (UNRWA, 2024a; World Health Organization, 2024a).

In terms of humanitarian aid, the number of trucks entering Gaza remained well below the target of 500 per day, and most border crossings continued to be subject to frequent closures (UNRWA, 2024a). As of December 2023, aid was primarily provided by the United States (\$73.73 million), the United Arab Emirates (\$59.37 million), and Switzerland (\$51.99 million). Funds were mainly channeled through organizations such as UNRWA, the World Food Programme, and UNICEF, which distributed food, provided shelter, and assisted children affected by the conflict (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024g).

As of February 12, 51% of humanitarian aid delivery missions were denied by Israeli authorities, especially in northern Gaza, where famine cases were critical (UNRWA, 2024a). Despite this, UNRWA managed to distribute aid in southern areas, including 22 million liters of water, nearly 7 million cans of food, over 136,000 mattresses, 3.1 million diapers, and 185,000 blankets, among other items. Psychosocial support programs were also maintained, although with several limitations (UNRWA, 2024a). In addition, 73% of the requested funding to assist the population had been raised (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024a).

Nevertheless, the attacks continued, and on February 19, five people were killed and several others injured when IDF helicopters opened fire on groups of people waiting for the delivery of humanitarian aid in Al Kuwaiti (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024a). Attacks were also reported against the largest UNRWA shelter in the south, which further increased the displacement of people toward Rafah (UNRWA, 2024a).

Draft Resolution S/2024/173, February 20, 2024

On February 20, 2024, Algeria proposed a new draft resolution, which referenced the provisional measures issued by the ICJ on January 26, 2024, in the case of *South Africa v. Israel*¹⁰, as well as the letter sent by the Secretary-General to the Security Council under Article 99 of the UN Charter. The draft resolution called for an immediate ceasefire; compliance with IHL and human rights, condemning attacks on civilians, civilian objects, and acts of terrorism; rejected the forced displacement of the Palestinian population; demanded the release of hostages and humanitarian access to meet medical needs; called for access to humanitarian aid in Gaza; the implementation of Resolutions 2712 (2023) and 2720 (2023); and emphasized the importance of a two-state solution, along with the need to unify the Gaza Strip with the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority (United Nations Security Council, 2024a).

Palestine's observer, along with Egypt, Israel, Qatar, and Tunisia, was invited to participate in the voting session. The U.S. representative stated that the U.S., alongside Egypt and Qatar, was working on an agreement for the release of hostages between Israel and Hamas, which would provide a calm period in Gaza, followed by efforts for a lasting peace. For this reason, she urged Member States not to hinder the negotiations, arguing that the resolution would disrupt the initiative by demanding a ceasefire without requiring Hamas to release the hostages. She also explained that the U.S. would propose an alternative draft resolution calling for a temporary ceasefire, pressuring Hamas to agree to negotiations, allowing the entry of humanitarian aid, asserting that Hamas should not govern Gaza in the future since it does not represent the Palestinian people, affirming that Gaza's territory must not be reduced and rejecting the forced displacement of its population, and supporting investigations into UNRWA staff allegedly involved in the October 7 attacks (United Nations Security Council, 2024f).

The Russian representative argued that U.S. bilateral diplomacy had yielded no results, as its aim was not to achieve peace, but to advance its own interests and protect its ally, as happened with Resolution 2720 (2023), which granted "a genuine license for Israel to kill Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories (...), maintaining its impunity for the many crimes it has committed against the population of Gaza" (United Nations Security Council, 2024f, p. 5). As a result of the vote, the draft received votes in favor from Algeria, China, Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, the Republic of Korea, Russia, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, and Switzerland; one vote against from the United States; and one abstention from the United Kingdom (United Nations Security Council, 2024f).

The United States justified its veto by again arguing that the resolution would not lead to sustainable peace, that a temporary ceasefire was needed first to allow humanitarian aid to enter, and that condemning Hamas's attacks was fundamental, as they initiated the conflict. The United Kingdom expressed concern about the situation in Rafah, where a military offensive would have devastating consequences for the refugees, who have nowhere else to go. It also emphasized the importance of the ongoing diplomatic negotiations, which could lead to a permanent ceasefire, the release of hostages, and the establishment of a unified Palestinian government that could promote a two-state solution. The UK abstained because it believed that merely demanding a ceasefire was not enough and could jeopardize diplomatic efforts; instead, it believed a pause should first be established to allow for aid and the release of hostages (United Nations Security Council, 2024f).

In response to the U.S. veto, China stated that the argument that the draft would disrupt negotiations made no sense, since the absence of a ceasefire allows hostilities to continue. It added that the veto would further destabilize the region and increase the risk of war spreading. China called on Israel to heed the voice of the international community and abandon its plan to attack Rafah (United Nations Security Council, 2024f).

The representative of Slovenia expressed concern over potential offensives in Rafah that could have serious humanitarian consequences. He emphasized the Security Council's duty to act to maintain international peace and security and stated that the draft resolution addressed and held all parties accountable for violations of IHL. Representatives from the Republic of Korea, Japan, Malta, Ecuador, and Switzerland expressed that they voted in favor of the draft but believed it should have included a clear condemnation of Hamas's attacks. Additionally, Malta's representative and that of France declared that the humanitarian conditions in Gaza were intolerable and must be urgently addressed, stressing the importance of Israel allowing the immediate delivery

¹⁰ Refers to the case filed by South Africa against Israel before the ICJ in December 2023 for alleged violations of the Genocide Convention, accusing Israel of committing genocidal acts in Gaza, such as killings, serious bodily or mental harm, inhumane living conditions, and restrictions on access to essential goods. In response, on January 26, 2024, the ICJ issued provisional measures requiring Israel to take all possible steps to prevent acts of genocide against the Palestinian population, to prevent and punish genocide, to allow humanitarian aid access, to preserve evidence related to acts of genocide, and to submit a report detailing the actions implemented to comply with the measures (Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (*South Africa v. Israel*), Provisional Measures, Order of 26 January 2024, 2024).

of humanitarian aid. Malta also mentioned the critical role of UNRWA in ensuring an effective humanitarian response (United Nations Security Council, 2024f).

The representative of Sierra Leone warned members about the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, reminding them that the Secretary-General had invoked Article 99 of the Charter. In line with this, he said the ICJ had acted appropriately in response to South Africa's request, and the Council must take action. Addressing the humanitarian situation, Guyana's representative described the severe food insecurity, stating that people were so desperate they were looting aid trucks for food. She also noted that vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly, and people with illnesses, were at risk of malnutrition, a situation worsened by freezing temperatures. Palestine's representative expressed deep disappointment that the draft was not adopted. He stated that Israel should not be protected by the use of the veto; instead, the Council should protect Palestinian children, women, and men. He concluded by stating that one day the international system will fulfill its responsibilities, "and Palestinian children will not be seen as a demographic threat, but as children with a right to live" (United Nations Security Council, 2024f, p.16).

Israel, on the other hand, declared that a ceasefire would not release the hostages nor eliminate Hamas or the terrorist groups seeking to annihilate Israel, but would "achieve only one thing: Hamas's survival (...) they will continue to massacre Israelis" (United Nations Security Council, 2024f, p. 16). Israel also stated that it wants a ceasefire, but this requires that "the hostages must be released and Hamas must surrender" (United Nations Security Council, 2024f, p. 17). It concluded by criticizing the United Nations, claiming that "dozens of UNRWA employees actively participated in the October 7 massacre" (United Nations Security Council, 2024f, p. 17), and that "underneath UNRWA's headquarters there was a Hamas data center, connected to UNRWA's electricity supply (...) and terrorist tunnels running beneath several UNRWA facilities and schools," adding that "12% of UNRWA's 1,300 employees in Gaza are members of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad," and thus "in Gaza, Hamas is the United Nations and the United Nations is Hamas" (United Nations Security Council, 2024f, p. 18). In response, China's representative argued that "the collective punishment of Palestinian civilians is not the right answer" (...) and that "the only path to peace between both nations is the implementation of the two-state solution," (...) and expressed hope that "Israel will listen to the overwhelming voice of the international community and (...) make the right decision" (United Nations Security Council, 2024f, p. 22).

In March 2024, even during the holy month of Ramadan, IDF attacks continued, including in Rafah, home to 1.2 million people, despite the international community's concerns over a potential military operation in the area (UNRWA, 2024b).

In Gaza, the death toll had risen to 31,988 people, including 27 children who had died from malnutrition and dehydration, and 74,188 Palestinians had been injured (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024b; World Health Organization, 2024b). 75% of the population was displaced in Gaza, while in the West Bank, due to home demolitions, more than 1,600 Palestinians, including 600 children, had been displaced since October 7 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024b). On the other hand, in Gaza, the IDF claimed to have killed 150 armed Palestinians and detained hundreds of suspects in approximately 60 IDF operations (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024b; UNRWA, 2024b).

In the Gaza Strip, 2.13 million Palestinians were living in acute food insecurity; water production from all sources had decreased to 5.7% of its normal capacity, resulting in per capita water consumption dropping to 3 liters per day—well below the minimum emergency threshold of 15 liters (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024b; World Health Organization, 2024b). The total blackout continued; only 28% of hospitals were operational, with an occupancy rate of 323%, and more than 60% of homes had been damaged. Additionally, 588,402 cases of acute respiratory infections were reported, and 9,000 critically ill patients required medical evacuation from Gaza (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024e; World Health Organization, 2024b).

Regarding humanitarian aid, despite the famine situation, there were no significant changes in the amount of supplies entering Gaza; around 159 aid trucks were entering the territory daily, although the target was 500 trucks per day (UNRWA, 2024b). The World Health Organization provided \$20.5 million worth of health supplies and continued delivering fuel, food, and water (World Health Organization, 2024b). As of March 21, 85% of the requested humanitarian aid funding had been collected (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024b).

Draft Resolution S/2024/239, March 22, 2024

On March 22, the United States proposed a new draft resolution condemning all acts of terrorism by Hamas; expressing concern for the safety of the more than 130 hostages held by Hamas, for the situation of the population in Gaza, and for the possibility of an offensive in Rafah; recalling the diplomatic negotiations underway with the support of Egypt and Qatar for a temporary ceasefire; and stating that Hamas does not stand for Palestinian self-determination. The draft expressed the need for a ceasefire and supported international diplomatic efforts; called for compliance with IHL and the expansion of humanitarian access to Gaza, the removal of obstacles, and access through all routes; welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to launch investigations into UNRWA staff for their involvement in the October 7 attacks; rejected actions that would reduce Gaza's territory, including plans to re-establish settlements in the area; and emphasized the importance of unifying the Gaza Strip and the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority (United Nations Security Council, 2024b).

The United States intervened, once again recalling the ongoing diplomatic negotiations, which, although not yet fulfilled, could pressure Hamas to accept the agreement if the draft were adopted. Russia, in turn, stated that the document did not demand a ceasefire and claimed that the purpose of the text was to exploit the pre-electoral period to appear to promote a ceasefire in Gaza through a document that failed to mention Israel's crimes and even allowed for a military operation in Rafah (United Nations Security Council, 2024g).

The draft received votes in favor from: Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States; votes against from Algeria, China, and Russia; and an abstention from Guyana. In response, the United States stated that Russia and China vetoed the text because they refuse to condemn Hamas's actions and because they do not want to approve a U.S.-backed draft, even though they do nothing to promote lasting peace or significantly contribute to humanitarian responses (United Nations Security Council, 2024g).

Algeria justified its vote against by arguing that the text did not mention Israel's responsibility in the suffering of the Palestinian people and added that UNRWA's operations are essential until refugees are able to return to their homes and sustain themselves. Moreover, it stated that diplomatic negotiations should not prevent the Council from demanding a ceasefire, as it is responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Guyana expressed that a ceasefire should not be linked to the release of hostages, as one injustice cannot be justified by committing another, nor should Palestinians be punished for the acts of others; it also stated that the document does not hold Israel accountable for the situation in Gaza (United Nations Security Council, 2024g).

Slovenia mentioned something similar, recognizing that although Hamas provoked the attacks on October 7, that does not justify the killing of over 32,000 Palestinians or the violation of IHL, making war a choice, not a necessity. For their part, France, China, Switzerland, and Malta expressed their opposition to any offensive in Rafah, and France declared that Hamas' attacks do not justify the suffering endured by the Palestinian people. Furthermore, China justified its veto by stating the need for an immediate ceasefire (United Nations Security Council, 2024g).

Israel concluded by claiming that the figures presented are false data from Hamas, which the United Nations repeats. It added that Israel does everything possible to minimize collateral damage, such as dropping warning leaflets, making phone calls, and using military maps to show safe corridors, whereas Hamas builds terrorist tunnels and provides false data. Along these lines, it stated that Israel does not obstruct the entry of humanitarian aid, and if someone lacks access to it, it is because Hamas steals most of it. Regarding the offensive in Rafah, it stated that four battalions remain in Rafah, and that it is necessary to destroy them to eliminate Hamas, after which a ceasefire could be possible. Finally, it declared that most Palestinians do not seek peace, but rather the annihilation of Israel, since the majority of Palestinians support Hamas' control in Gaza (United Nations Security Council, 2024g).

It is important to mention that, although Israel claims to implement measures to minimize collateral damage, a report by Human Rights Watch (2024a) revealed certain flaws in the evacuation system, stating that the orders were contradictory, changed without notice, or were issued during power and telecommunications outages, making it impossible for the population to receive the information. This caused chaos among civilians, increased displacement under unsafe conditions, and violated IHL (Human Rights Watch, 2024a).

As of April 2024, 34,049 deaths and 76,901 injuries had been reported, and 75% of the population was displaced (World Health Organization, 2024c). On April 15, the IDF released 150 Palestinians who had been detained in Gaza, although it was estimated that around 1,600 Palestinians remained in Israeli prisons (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024c). Daily water consumption per person dropped to 1.5 liters, one-tenth of the minimum amount required in emergencies, which put the health of pregnant and breastfeeding women and their babies at greater risk. In addition, women faced risks of reproductive and urinary tract infections due to the critical access to water, toilets, and menstrual hygiene

products (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024c). Only 31% of hospitals were operational, with an occupancy rate of 254% (World Health Organization, 2024c). However, there were no safe places in Gaza due to bombings, famine, and the destruction of vital services and infrastructure (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024c).

Draft Resolution S/2024/312, April 18, 2024

On April 18, Algeria recommended the admission of the State of Palestine as a member of the United Nations (United Nations Security Council, 2024c). During the session, the representative of Algeria stated that its admission is the least that can be done to repay the debt owed to its people, demonstrating that the international community supports Palestine, and adding that it meets all necessary criteria. He also stated that Palestine's admission would be a step toward a two-state solution. Algeria, China, Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, the Republic of Korea, Russia, Sierra Leone, and Slovenia voted in favor; the United States voted against; Switzerland and the United Kingdom abstained (United Nations Security Council, 2024h).

The United States argued that it supports the creation of a Palestinian State if it is achieved through a peace agreement with Israel. In addition, it stated that there is no unanimity regarding whether Palestine meets the criteria to be considered a State under Article 4 of the Charter, since Hamas holds power in Gaza, and Palestine's recognition should occur when Israel and the Palestinian Authority engage in direct negotiations. The United Kingdom and Switzerland expressed that peace must be ensured before Palestine is admitted as a State (United Nations Security Council, 2024h).

On the other hand, Russia stated that the United States seeks to protect Israel's interests and subject Palestinians to the Occupying Power, forcing them to leave their land. It added that despite this, the vast majority of the international community supports Palestine's request to become a full member. Guyana, Slovenia, Japan, and Mozambique expressed that Palestine meets the criteria to be considered a State. China stated that it is unacceptable for some countries to question whether Palestine meets the requirements in accordance with the Charter, casting doubt on whether it is peace-loving. China added that questioning this is an insult to the Palestinian people, who have suffered the consequences of occupation. It also stated that the admission of Palestine would promote negotiations with Israel, something some countries demand as a prerequisite for recognition. Ecuador, for its part, reaffirmed its support for the Palestinian people, stating that since 2010, it has recognized Palestine as an independent State, voted in favor of granting it observer State status in 2012, and maintains an embassy in Ramallah, while Palestine maintains an embassy in Quito (United Nations Security Council, 2024h).

The representative of Palestine argued that the right to self-determination is a natural, historical, and legal right for independent States such as Palestine; and that it is a right that cannot be extinguished or delayed, despite the practices of the Occupying Power that go against the Charter, such as occupation, killings, evictions, and settlements. He also added that Israel does not seek a two-state solution, as it does not want a Palestinian State to exist, and recalled a map displayed by Netanyahu before the General Assembly in September 2023, where Palestinian territories did not appear. Finally, he stated that Palestine's admission as a full member is an investment in peace, and that the Council should therefore grant it. Israel stated that the Palestinian Authority does not meet the requirements since it does not have authority over its territory; and added that it does not recognize Israel's right to exist, making peace impossible (United Nations Security Council, 2024h).

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza continued to worsen, and as of November 20, 2024, the death toll had risen to 44,056, and the number of injured to 104,268 (World Health Organization, 2024d). 90% of the population, that is, 1.9 million people, were displaced—many of them ten times or more (UNRWA, 2024c). In addition, a large number of people remained trapped under the rubble, as excavation teams were paralyzed due to the fuel supply blockade (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024f), which also affected the provision of medical services, the operation of hospitals, and ambulances (World Health Organization, 2024d). In line with this, the energy crisis had prevented the entry of cooking gas to northern Gaza for more than 13 months, and none of the kitchens were operational (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024f). Over one million people had not received food parcels since July, and the price of a 25kg bag of wheat flour rose from \$10 to \$100 in 2024 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024f). In northern Gaza as well, around 70,000 people had difficulty accessing drinking water, and access to fuel that enabled the operation of the remaining water wells had been blocked. Additionally, requests to deliver supplies and fuel were denied, increasing the risk of dehydration and exposure to disease (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024f). UNICEF, for its part, sent 20,000 liters of chlorine for the operation of desalination plants, which had been depleted for

months, leaving water exposed to contamination—exacerbated by the destruction of water and sanitation infrastructure (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024f).

Regarding humanitarian aid, the World Health Organization delivered 40.5 million health items and provided 10,000 liters of fuel to northern Gaza (World Health Organization, 2024d). Nevertheless, a large portion of humanitarian assistance was denied by the IDF. Between November 1 and 18, 27 out of 31 requests to access areas in need were denied, and the supply of fuel for water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities was not permitted. Likewise, food security was deteriorating as aid trucks continued to be looted by Palestinians (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024f).

On another note, on November 15, the IDF released 20 Palestinian detainees who reported having been subjected to torture in Israeli prisons, including physical assaults, and deprivation of sleep, food, water, and medical care (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024f).

Draft Resolution S/2024/835, November 20, 2024

Finally, on November 20, the last vetoed draft resolution was proposed, submitted by 10 countries: Algeria, Ecuador, Slovenia, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, and Switzerland. The document reiterated support for the two-state solution, which required unifying the Gaza Strip with the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority. The draft demanded an immediate ceasefire and the release of hostages; respect for IHL; immediate access to humanitarian aid in Gaza; the implementation of Resolution 2735 (2024), adopted in June 2024¹¹; and called on UNRWA to continue its work (United Nations Security Council, 2024d).

The draft received 14 votes in favor out of the 15 members of the Council. However, it was not adopted due to the United States' veto. The U.S. argued that it could not approve a resolution that did not require the release of hostages, as this would send a message that Hamas had no need to return to diplomatic negotiations. Furthermore, the resolution did not condemn the October 7 attacks. Algeria's representative stated that with the veto, the message sent to Israel was that it could continue committing genocide against the Palestinian people. China expressed that although Israel had violated IHL, the United States continued to defend it and added that the resolution did call for the release of the hostages. Russia reaffirmed that the document demanded the release of hostages and stated that the October 7 attacks should not be presented as the beginning of the conflict, as it has deeper historical roots—since one party was able to establish its own state, while the other was denied that right. In response, the United States remarked that Russia should not accuse a State of killing civilians in light of its own war in Ukraine (United Nations Security Council, 2024i).

Palestine stated that there is no legal justification for the situation of the Palestinian population, the killings, the famines, the displacements, or the annexation; and that as long as there is no ceasefire, Israel will continue. It also mentioned that if Resolution 2735 (2024) had been implemented and a ceasefire had been achieved, there would be no need to propose this draft resolution. However, that was not accomplished, and even so, a draft aimed at stopping a genocide was vetoed. In response, Israel stated that in the Palestinian representative's declaration, there was no mention of Hamas. Finally, it thanked the United States for vetoing the draft resolution, which ignored the situation of the 101 hostages held by Hamas, and mentioned that the approval of the document would have meant rewarding Hamas's violence. It concluded by declaring that if Hamas surrenders, the conflict would end, but until that happens, they will do whatever is necessary to protect their people (United Nations Security Council, 2024i).

Since March 18, the IDF intensified attacks in Gaza, and humanitarian operations have been hindered by the Israeli government's blockade, the deaths of humanitarian workers, attacks on facilities, and movement restrictions within Gaza (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025). On the other hand, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and other countries resumed funding to UNRWA, unlike the United States, which halted its funding and approved \$17.9 billion in security assistance to Israel. In contrast, the Netherlands, Canada, and the United Kingdom suspended some of their arms transfers to Israel to prevent their weapons from being used in violations of IHL (Human Rights Watch, 2024b).

As of April 2025, 50,810 Palestinians had been killed, and 115,688 were injured, including 1,449 Palestinians who died since March 18, after the resumption of attacks. More than 1,600 Israelis had died, and as of April 8, Hamas was estimated to be holding 59 Israeli hostages, including deceased ones (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025). 90% of the population is displaced, including more than 390,000 people displaced in the last three weeks (United Nations Office for the Coordination of

¹¹ Resolution 2735 (2024) included a three-phase negotiation process: a ceasefire and release of hostages, the exchange of Palestinian prisoners, the return of the remains of deceased hostages, the return of Palestinian civilians to their homes and neighborhoods across all areas of Gaza—including the north—and the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza (United Nations Security Council, 2024e).

Humanitarian Affairs, 2025; UNRWA, 2025). In terms of infrastructure, 92% of homes were destroyed or damaged (UNRWA, 2025), and 58% of hospitals were only partially functioning. In Gaza, medicines and medical supplies are running out (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025).

Following the breakdown of the ceasefire, Israel resumed attacks after 17 days of blockade, during which the entry of humanitarian and commercial supplies, including fuel, was suspended, and electricity was cut off, affecting the operation of the desalination plant in southern Gaza and exposing the population to life-threatening conditions (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025; UNRWA, 2025). Currently, only one of the three water pipelines from Israel to Gaza is operational, with an 85% reduction in water production capacity due to power cuts. Access to safe drinking water for one million people is limited to 6 liters per day (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025).

On the other hand, it is estimated that in 2024, 74% of the population (4.1 million people) lived in poverty; GDP contracted by 35%; and unemployment rose to 49%. Moreover, Palestine's HDI fell to 0.643, a setback of 24 years; while in Gaza, it dropped to 0.408, a setback of 69 years (United Nations Development Programme, 2024). Almost all sectors in Gaza experienced economic paralysis; prices rose by 300% compared to 2023, and food prices increased by 450%. Reconstruction needs in Gaza are estimated at \$53 billion, with the most affected sectors being housing, commerce, industry, and vital infrastructure (World Bank, 2025).

Regarding humanitarian aid, since the ceasefire, more than 193 WHO trucks have entered Gaza. However, between April 3 and 7, of the 36 planned aid deliveries, 25 were denied. As of March 8, \$4.07 billion had been raised to meet the needs of 3.3 million people in Gaza and the West Bank (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025).

Table 2 shows a comparison between the humanitarian consequences in Gaza and Israel following the attacks of October 7.

Table 2
Humanitarian Consequences after October 7, 2023

Category	Main Data	
	Gaza	Israel
Deaths	50,810 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025).	+1,600 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025).
Injured	115,688 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025).	5,400 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025).
Hostages	Not officially reported.	59 hostages taken by Hamas (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025).
Displaced People	90% of the population displaced (UNRWA Spain, 2025).	75,200 displaced from the south (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2024).
Infrastructure	92% of homes destroyed or damaged. 58% of hospitals partially functioning (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025).	No reported damage.
Essential Services	Fuel access blocked, electricity outages. Medicines and medical supplies nearly depleted (UNRWA, 2024a).	No reported damage.
Food and Water	85% reduction in water production capacity. 6 liters of water per person/day (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025).	No reported damage.
Humanitarian Aid	Over 193 WHO trucks delivered. April 3–7: 25 of 36 planned aid deliveries denied. \$4.07 billion raised to assist 3.3 million people (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025).	Government subsidies for displaced persons (Wrobel & Reuters, 2025).
Socioeconomic Impact	74% of the population in poverty in 2024. GDP contracted by 35%. Unemployment at 49%. HDI in Gaza fell to 0.408 (UNDP, 2024) Prices rose 300%, food 450%. \$53B needed for Gaza's reconstruction (Human Rights Watch, 2024b).	1/5 of the displaced population unemployed. Economic slowdown in the north (Wrobel & Reuters, 2025).
International Support	The EU, UK, and others resumed funding to UNRWA (Human Rights Watch, 2024b).	The US suspended UNRWA funding. Approved \$17.9B in military assistance to Israel. The Netherlands, Canada, and the UK suspended some arms transfers to Israel (Human Rights Watch, 2024b).

5. Discussion

The United Nations Security Council, as the body responsible for ensuring international peace and security, is the only one with the authority to adopt binding decisions to prevent and resolve conflicts (United Nations Security Council, n/d-b). Within the framework of IHL, and in compliance with the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, this body has the responsibility to promote measures that protect the civilian population, limit methods of warfare, and ensure respect for the principles of, among others, proportionality and distinction (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2012).

However, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict constitutes a case of serious violations of IHL, as evidenced by the indiscriminate use of weapons in populated areas, the deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure, forced displacements, and restrictions on access to humanitarian aid (Sarango Llinin, 2024; Secretary-General, 2024). These actions have intensified the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, understood as an emergency situation in which the population requires urgent assistance in food, medical care, and other essential services for survival (Lozano, 2019). In response to this reality, Security Council members have proposed multiple draft resolutions

aimed at halting hostilities, facilitating humanitarian access, and protecting civilians. However, the use of veto power has blocked these initiatives, preventing an effective international response, prolonging the conflict, and worsening humanitarian conditions, as detailed below.

Veto of October 18, 2023 (vetoed by the United States)

The draft resolution sought the release of hostages and the implementation of humanitarian pauses to ensure the provision of essential services amid the humanitarian crisis, which already included a high number of deaths, injuries, displacements, and the collapse of basic services (United Nations Security Council, 2023a).

The 12 votes in favor of the draft were based on the need to prevent the worsening of the humanitarian crisis. Albania, for example, recognized Israel's right to self-defense, while the United Arab Emirates referred to the structural causes of the conflict. However, the United States vetoed the resolution, citing the possibility that its approval could interfere with the diplomatic negotiations being led by President Biden. Additionally, it justified its veto due to the lack of an explicit reference to Israel's right to defend itself. This position, however, contradicts the IHL principle of proportionality, which establishes that attacks must avoid causing excessive harm to the civilian population in relation to the anticipated military advantage. The United Kingdom abstained due to the absence of explicit recognition of Israel's right to self-defense and the lack of condemnation of Hamas' actions. Russia abstained because the draft did not call for an immediate ceasefire (United Nations Security Council, 2023f).

The humanitarian crisis persisted, despite the financial assistance provided by the United States following the vote and the entry of the first aid trucks into the Gaza Strip, as the aid received was far below what was needed (Congressional Research Service, 2023). The number of deaths since October 7 had doubled; a large portion of the population was displaced and living in overcrowded conditions; the lack of water and fuel led people to take extreme survival measures, such as eating only once a day; and the damage to infrastructure also represented a violation of IHL, as no distinction was made between civilian and military targets (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023b).

Veto of October 25, 2023 (vetoed by China and Russia)

The new draft resolution called for the establishment of humanitarian pauses and the release of hostages. Ten countries voted in favor, mainly due to the urgency of protecting the civilian population and ensuring access to humanitarian aid, and five of them also expressed support for the inclusion of Israel's right to self-defense (United Nations Security Council, 2023b). However, China and Russia vetoed the draft, arguing that it did not demand a ceasefire, a position also shared by the United Arab Emirates, which voted against. The two countries that abstained did not explain their reasons (United Nations Security Council, 2023g).

Despite references to humanitarian access and the protection of civilians, the use of the veto prevented the adoption of the resolution, allowing violence to continue and humanitarian conditions to deteriorate. However, Resolution 2712, adopted on November 15, established humanitarian pauses and sought primarily the protection of children. From Israel's perspective, the attacks by Hamas should have been condemned—not only because this group represents a threat to Israeli security, but also because they are responsible for the humanitarian crisis in Gaza (United Nations Security Council, 2023h). In this regard, days after the resolution's adoption, attempts by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States to reach an agreement were paralyzed by the resumption of the offensive, after Hamas launched rockets into Israeli territory (CNN, 2023). Consequently, humanitarian consequences worsened: overcrowding in Rafah increased, clean water and food became scarcer, basic services collapsed, and reports of abuses by the IDF emerged (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023c).

Veto of December 8, 2023 (vetoed by the United States)

The third draft resolution that was vetoed had as its main objectives an immediate ceasefire and the guarantee of humanitarian access (United Nations Security Council, 2023c). The draft, co-sponsored by over 100 countries, received the favorable vote of 13 countries, which expressed the need for a ceasefire to prevent further suffering for the population, although four of them also stated that the draft should have included a condemnation of the Hamas attacks, in which around 1,200 Israelis were killed, many of them burned alive and subjected to sexual violence. The United States voted against the resolution because its recommendations had not been included: the draft did not condemn the Hamas attacks or their acts of sexual and gender-based violence, nor did it mention Israel's right to self-defense. The United Kingdom abstained, noting concern over the conditions in Gaza, but also expressing the need to condemn Hamas's attacks and to demand the release of all hostages (United Nations Security Council, 2023h).

The population continued to suffer the consequences of the Council's inaction, as the number of deaths, injuries, and displaced persons increased rapidly; essential services remained collapsed, and the risk of famine grew steadily (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024a). The use of the veto contradicted the purpose of the United Nations and failed to fulfill the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, despite the fact that the humanitarian crisis had been recognized by the international community, and the UN Secretary-General had stressed the urgency of ending the conflict by invoking Article 99 of the UN Charter (United Nations Security Council, 2023h).

Veto of February 20, 2024 (vetoed by the United States)

The following draft resolution also demanded an immediate ceasefire, the release of hostages, and humanitarian access, again referencing the Secretary-General's invocation of Article 99 of the Charter (United Nations Security Council, 2024a). Thirteen States voted in favor, motivated by the need to respond to the humanitarian crisis. The United States justified its vote against the resolution by arguing that its approval would hinder diplomatic negotiations taking place with Egypt and Qatar—a position shared by the United Kingdom, which abstained (United Nations Security Council, 2024f).

From a geopolitical perspective, bilateral negotiations represented a strategic alternative for the United States, allowing it to maintain regional influence and ensure that its conditions for agreeing to a ceasefire were included, such as condemning Hamas's attacks, referencing Israel's right to self-defense, and securing the release of hostages (United Nations Security Council, 2024f). This diplomatic approach also reinforced its role as a power in the Middle East, coordinating efforts with its allies in the region, such as Egypt and Qatar. Additionally, it allowed the United States to present itself to the international community not only as the main donor of humanitarian aid, but also as an actor seeking resolution to the conflict (Soler i Lecha, 2017; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024g).

Although most members expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in Gaza, the U.S. veto blocked the adoption of the resolution. The United States' position was criticized by countries such as Russia, which stated that the diplomatic negotiations had produced no results, and that the U.S. goal was to protect its interests and defend Israel. For Israel, approval of the draft would have strengthened Hamas and increased the likelihood of a new attack like those of October 2023. Therefore, Israel stated that the only solution to end the conflict would be for Hamas to surrender (United Nations Security Council, 2024f).

With the resolution blocked, it became evident how the political use of veto power can prevent the Security Council from taking action, even when a majority of its members support ending the violence and addressing the humanitarian situation in accordance with IHL and respect for Human Rights (United Nations Security Council, 2024f).

Despite the entry of humanitarian aid trucks into the territory, the supplies were insufficient and could not meet the needs of the population, which was in alarming condition, with 75% of the population displaced—many of them multiple times (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024b). As is common in humanitarian crises, children and women were the most affected by malnutrition and disease.

Veto of March 22, 2024 (vetoed by China and Russia)

This new draft resolution expressed the need to achieve a ceasefire, although it did not explicitly request one. Instead, it demanded the expansion of humanitarian access to the territory (United Nations Security Council, 2024b). The document also highlighted the ongoing bilateral negotiations between the United States, Egypt, and Qatar, which geopolitically demonstrated the role and influence of the United States and its allies in the region. Russia, for its part, argued that the United States was using the draft for political purposes, taking advantage of the pre-election period rather than showing a real commitment to a solution (United Nations Security Council, 2024g).

Once again, the 11 countries that voted in favor did so for humanitarian reasons, and several expressed concern over a possible offensive in Rafah. Russia and China vetoed the draft because it did not demand a ceasefire. Algeria, which also voted against, added that the resolution did not mention Israel's responsibility in the current humanitarian situation. Guyana, which abstained, expressed the same concerns as Algeria. For the United States, the resolution's failure was a geopolitical matter: Russia and China preferred to block the draft because it was presented by the U.S. For this reason, the United States questioned the justifications for the veto, especially from Russia, pointing to its own conflict with Ukraine. Additionally, it argued that unlike U.S. efforts, those countries were not pursuing alternative negotiation paths (United Nations Security Council, 2024g).

In terms of humanitarian consequences, the number of deaths was near 35,000 people; 75% of the population was displaced; and water consumption had been reduced to 1.5 liters per person per day (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024c; World Health Organization, 2024c). These situations represented serious violations of IHL, although the Israeli representative claimed that the figures were false data provided by Hamas, and that Israel always attempted to minimize collateral damage—claims that have been questioned by organizations such as Human Rights Watch (United Nations Security Council, 2024g).

Veto of April 18, 2024 (vetoed by the United States)

The following draft resolution sought the admission of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations (United Nations Security Council, 2024c). The 12 countries that voted in favor argued that Palestine met the criteria to be recognized as a State and was already recognized by more than 140 countries. Additionally, several of the members who voted in favor expressed that its admission to the UN would enable progress toward the two-state solution by establishing conditions of equality between the two conflicting parties (United Nations Security Council, 2024h). Furthermore, from a geopolitical perspective, the admission of a State as a full member of the UN is of great significance, as once an entity is admitted by recommendation of the Council and with the support of two-thirds of the General Assembly, its statehood is firmly established under international law (Dal Ri Júnior & Carnesella, 2017). Therefore, the recognition of Palestine could strengthen its role as a sovereign actor in future peace processes, by enabling it to establish relations with other entities from a more symmetrical position in relation to Israel.

However, the United States' vote against was justified by the argument that the creation of a Palestinian State should occur only after a peace agreement is achieved, in relation to the two-state solution. Additionally, Switzerland and the United Kingdom abstained, arguing that a peace agreement must first be reached, ensuring that Hamas does not control Gaza, before addressing the question of admission (United Nations Security Council, 2024h). One of the reasons some States condition the recognition of Palestine on a negotiated agreement between the two parties and the withdrawal of Hamas from Gaza is that Hamas has stated the need to eliminate Israel in order to ensure Palestine's security and existence. Therefore, with such statements, as long as Hamas controls Gaza, there will be a threat to Israel's existence, making the two-state solution impossible. However, for the State of Palestine, its admission to the United Nations is a right that would bring it closer to a peace agreement; whereas for Israel, such peace would be impossible given that the Palestinian Authority does not recognize Israel's right to exist (United Nations Security Council, 2024h).

Although Palestine meets the criteria of the 1933 Montevideo Convention to be recognized as a State (territory, population, government, and relations with other States) and is recognized by 147 UN member states (Dahiya, 2023; France 24, 2024a), the United States' veto prevented Palestine's admission as a full member of the United Nations, and it therefore still holds Observer State status. For the United States, ensuring Israel's security is essential before Palestine's admission, based on the fact that Hamas maintains territorial control over Gaza, which could be interpreted as an indirect recognition of its government if Palestine were admitted. It is worth noting, however, that the recognition of Palestine would not imply recognition of Hamas, since the PLO has been recognized in multiple Security Council resolutions as the sole representative of the Palestinian people (United Nations General Assembly, 2012b; United Nations Security Council, 2024h).

In contrast, the Latin American, African, and Asian states that have recognized Palestine have done so based on the need to grant it a status equivalent to that of Israel, reduce political asymmetries and ensure that both states would have the same rights and obligations. After establishing this political balance, a peace process between the parties could begin. Moreover, Palestine's admission would also respond to the requirements established by the Charter of the United Nations, which states that members must be "peace-loving" (United Nations Charter, 1945; United Nations Security Council, 2024h). Therefore, the use of the veto by the United States represents a manifestation of its power in the international arena, as by blocking the resolution, it not only protects Israel's interests, but also conditions the evolution of the conflict to its own terms. An abstention, such as that of the United Kingdom, would have allowed the Council to express itself in accordance with the majority and could have laid the groundwork for a future peaceful solution.

Although this draft resolution did not directly address the humanitarian situation or seek a ceasefire, it was an attempt to advance the political recognition of Palestine in the international arena, and it could have been a step toward negotiating a peace agreement. Additionally, in Gaza, the humanitarian crisis continued, with the prolonged conflict, basic services near collapse, and IHL being ignored. (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024c)

Veto of November 20, 2024 (vetoed by the United States)

The last vetoed draft resolution aimed to achieve a ceasefire, the release of hostages, access to humanitarian aid, and the implementation of Resolution 2375 (2024) (United Nations Security Council, 2024d). Of the 15 members of the Council, 14 voted in favor of the draft, due to the need to respond to the humanitarian crisis after more than a year of conflict. Some of the countries that voted in favor expressed the importance of UNRWA's work in the region. The United States, the only one that voted against and blocked the resolution, once again stated that the draft would hinder ongoing negotiations and also claimed that the draft did not demand the release of hostages, even though this issue was indeed included in the text. Palestine stated that if the adopted resolutions were being respected, a new draft resolution would not have been necessary; while Israel once again argued that, to end the conflict, Hamas should surrender. An important issue for Israel, especially in this resolution, was the lack of acknowledgment of Hamas's attacks, as they were still holding 101 people hostage. The absence of mention of Hamas's actions signified a certain impunity for Israel, which reinforced the idea that the State of Israel was the one that should protect its people (United Nations Security Council, 2024i).

From the perspective of IHL, the veto prevented the adoption of measures to guarantee the protection of the population, but also those aimed at ensuring compliance with the Council's binding resolutions. In this way, the Council was unable to prevent a rise in the number of deaths, injuries, displaced persons, and collapsed infrastructure and services, and the humanitarian aid that did enter continued to be insufficient. Thus, the humanitarian crisis reached current figures¹², with more than 50,000 people killed, 90% of the population displaced, and economic consequences representing a severe setback for the population (United Nations Development Programme, 2024; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2025).

The vetoes of the seven draft resolutions, as noted by authors Fernbach (1945) and Wouters and Ruys (2005), highlight the imbalance in the structure of the Security Council and, in many cases, its inability to act in the face of international conflicts that pose a threat to international peace and security. In line with this, the use of the right of veto in the Council has not only hindered international efforts aimed at reducing the humanitarian deterioration in the Palestinian territories but has also allowed the worsening of a humanitarian crisis characterized by a high number of civilian casualties, mass displacement, destruction of civilian infrastructure, and disruption of basic services.

Taken together, the analysis of the vetoes exercised by the United States, Russia, and China since the escalation of the conflict on October 7, 2023, allows us to address the specific objective of this thesis: to analyze the impact of the blocked resolutions on humanitarian conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories. In this way, it becomes clear how the use of the right of veto has affected the deterioration of living conditions for the Palestinian population and has limited the Security Council's ability to fulfill its mandate to maintain international peace and security.

6. Conclusion

The use of the right of veto by the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council has had a negative impact on the humanitarian response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2023. Although the seven analyzed draft resolutions shared common objectives—such as the respect for and enforcement of IHL, the release of hostages, humanitarian pauses, and access to aid—none were adopted due to the vetoes of the United States, Russia, and China. These vetoes were generally due to one side of the Council insisting on including elements such as the explicit condemnation of the attacks carried out by Hamas on October 7, the recognition of Israel's right to self-defense, and the need to identify Hamas as a non-state actor undermining peace, while the other side of the Council demanded the establishment of an immediate ceasefire. This led to a stalemate in the initiatives of the international community, which sought to respond to the serious humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Although the draft resolutions were not perfect, and members of the Security Council expressed the need to include elements such as Israel's right to self-defense or a condemnation of the Hamas attacks of October 7, during the voting on the draft resolutions, two key aspects were weighed: first, the urgent need to alleviate human suffering, and second, the political interests of certain Member States. Those who voted in favor did so primarily for humanitarian reasons, prioritizing the cessation of violence and the delivery of humanitarian aid over political interests. Many of these countries, which voted in favor of the resolutions, have historically supported the Palestinian cause; and even in proposals presented by the United States—despite

¹² Figures as of April 8, 2025.

knowing these projects would not end the conflict since they did not call for a ceasefire—States supported them at least to allow humanitarian aid to enter and to protect the civilian population, in the hope that future negotiations would achieve a total cessation of hostilities. However, there were also States traditionally aligned with Western powers that supported the projects to reduce the impact of the humanitarian crisis and as a demonstration of the Security Council's responsibility to act in the face of conflict.

In contrast, the votes against were justified by the lack of condemnation of the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023, the failure to recognize Israel's right to self-defense, or the fear of interfering with diplomatic negotiations being carried out by countries such as the United States, Egypt, and Qatar, aimed at reaching a ceasefire agreement that included the release of hostages. Additionally, among the arguments used by countries that voted against the draft resolutions presented by the United States, the omission of Israel's responsibility in the humanitarian crisis and the lack of reference to the structural issues of the conflict were highlighted. This shows that the right of veto, on several occasions, favored political positions over the protection of civilian lives.

Although the Hamas attack on October 7 was condemnable and generated legitimate security concerns for Israel, the Israeli military response has been disproportionate and has caused a level of destruction and human suffering that violates the principles of proportionality and distinction under IHL, which establishes that the use of force in self-defense must remain within legal limits to ensure the protection of the population. Likewise, the Palestinian cause cannot be used as a justification to commit deliberate acts of violence against Israeli civilians. Both parties have committed violations of International Law, including torture, executions, and indiscriminate attacks, with consequences that are not only affecting the present but will also impact future generations, who are growing up in a hostile environment, with psychological trauma, and often without access to education.

Finally, the war in Gaza in October 2023 has not only intensified a humanitarian catastrophe to extreme levels, but it has also affected the credibility of the international system, as in the case of the United Nations, due to the Security Council's inability to act in the face of this humanitarian crisis—especially when the right of veto is used to protect the political interests of States and their allies above humanitarian needs. Any lasting solution requires not only political will but also full recognition that the life of every human being, regardless of nationality, has equal value and deserves equal protection and dignity.

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