

## INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Eleni Kyriakidi and I am sixteen years old and go to Leonteios School of Athens. The topic being discussed this year is a complex issue: though to many of us the Mediterranean is known as a natural beauty it is also a region plagued by not one but several conflicts. It also faces other issues such as illicit drug and weapon trade, human trafficking and human smuggling. I hope this study guide helps you understand the issues that are going to be discussed. Please note that additional research into the topic and your country's policy is required. I look forward to being your Chair on this issue.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me at my personal email [eleni.kyriakid@gmail.com](mailto:eleni.kyriakid@gmail.com).

## DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Human Trafficking: according to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, human trafficking is the: *“recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs”*<sup>1</sup>.

Zionism: the belief that Judaism is both a religion and nationality.<sup>2</sup> According to Oxford Learner's Dictionaries it is defined as *“a political movement that was originally concerned with establishing an independent state for Jewish people, and is now concerned with developing the state of Israel”*.<sup>3</sup> Though sometimes the words “Zionist” and “Jewish” are used interchangeably, their definitions differ.

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<sup>1</sup> “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.” OHCHR, [www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolTraffickingInPersons.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolTraffickingInPersons.aspx).

<sup>2</sup> Beauchamp, Zack. "What Is Zionism?" Vox. Vox, 14 May 2018. Web. 29 Aug. 2019.

<sup>3</sup> "Zionism Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes: Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com." Zionism Noun - Definition, Pictures,

PLO: (Palestinian Liberation Organization): According to the Cambridge Dictionary it is “ an organization formed to protect and to represent Palestinians that seeks to establish an independent Palestinian state”<sup>4</sup>

Idlib: Idlib is a province in Syria which according to the BBC borders “Turkey, to the north, and straddles highways running south from Aleppo to Hama and the capital Damascus, and west to Latakia on the Mediterranean coast”<sup>5</sup>

## TIMELINE

- 1914 World War I starts
- 1918 Ottoman Empire falls
- 1917 Balfour Declaration is issued stating that the UK favored the establishment of a Jewish homeland within Palestine
- 1918 end of World War I
- 1922 the British Mandate of Palestine comes into effect
- 1936-1939 the Arab revolt, riots which turn violent take place
- 1939 White paper is issued in response to Arab revolt
- 1947 Israeli- Palestine conflict is taken to UN after the UK government fails to solve the problem
- 14<sup>th</sup> May 1948 the creation of Israel was proclaimed by the head of Jewish Agency
- 1948-1949 first Arab -Israeli war (also known as Israel’s War of independence)
- 1949 UNRWA is created, an organization aimed at helping Palestinian refugees
- 1956 second Arab-Israeli war (Suez Crisis) in which Israel, the UK and France invade Egypt
- 1967 Third Arab-Israeli war also known as Six Day War
- 1973 Yom Kippur War or Ramadan war in which Egypt and Syria invade Israel
- 2011 Syrian conflict starts after protests escalate into armed violence
- March 2011 Arab league suspends Syria in an effort to increase pressure on Assad.
- 2018 Syrian army gains control of most of the south of the country
- 2019 HTS, a jihadist group gains control of Idlib

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*Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Aug. 2019.*

<sup>4</sup> “PLO: Definition in the Cambridge English Dictionary.” *PLO | Definition in the Cambridge English Dictionary*, [dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/plo](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/plo).

<sup>5</sup> "Syria War: Why Does the Battle for Idlib Matter?" *BBC News*. BBC, 04 June 2019. Web. 29 Aug. 2019.

## TOPIC DISCUSSION

### Human trafficking in the Mediterranean

In the past years a number of conflicts have caused huge population displacement. This caused what came to be known as a migrant crisis leaving many people vulnerable to being trafficked.

It is important to understand the legal differences between human trafficking and smuggling. Though often used interchangeably they are not the same thing. The main differences are that smuggling happens with the consent of the person as opposed to trafficking and that smuggling involves the act of helping somebody enter the borders of another country illegally and therefore is of transnational character. Trafficking can be either transnational either within the borders of one country. In all cases it involves exploitation of the victim, needless to say that it is a horrific violation of human rights.

According to the UNHCR, most people attempting to access Europe via the Mediterranean from Africa depart from Libya and Morocco. Libya is considered a high-risk country for trafficking due to the chaos and conflict within the country meaning that there is little monitoring on such issues. The main migration routes are: the Central Mediterranean route from sub-Saharan Africa to Italy, the Eastern Mediterranean route which is from Turkey to Greece and the Western Mediterranean route which is from Morocco to Spain.

### Israel – Palestine Conflict

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following anti-Semitism the prosecution of Jews in eastern Europe and Russia, the Zionist movement began searching for a place to establish a nation of their own. Places in the Near East, Africa and Argentina were considered but in the end Palestine was chosen because of religious and historic ties Jews had with the land. Historically Jewish kingdoms existed there in the past. The Sykes-Picot agreement which was issued secretly during WWI between the UK and France specified that Palestine would come under international administration. In contrast in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, Britain had stated that *“His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country”*<sup>6</sup>. This declaration was later incorporated into the British mandate. Certain historians believe that Britain used advocacy for the Zionist movement to justify why it should administer Palestine, circumventing the Sykes-Picot agreement, as the area was of strategic importance. After the fall of the Ottoman empire, which had controlled Palestine in WWI the territory of Palestine was placed under UK rule as was agreed at the San Remo conference. The Mandate did not come into effect until 1922. Throughout the British Mandate of Palestine there was Jewish migration which was

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<sup>6</sup> “Balfour Declaration - UK/Non-UN Document (2 November 1917).” United Nations, United Nations, [unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/E210CA73E38D9E1D052565FA00705C61](https://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/E210CA73E38D9E1D052565FA00705C61).

encouraged by the Zionist Organization and it increased when Jews started being horrifically prosecuted by the Nazis. The Arabs, which constituted the majority of the population of Palestine, wished for independence and were rather discontented by the huge influx of Jewish refugees. To better understand the significance of this influx in 1919 Jews made up approximately 10% of the population; twenty years later they accounted for almost 30% of the population.<sup>7</sup> The Arabs viewed this as colonization and expressed their discontent initially through riots and later through armed force and violence, in what was called the Arab Revolt which was brutally suppressed by British forces. In response to the Arab revolt the “White Paper” was issued which clarified what was meant by the Balfour Declaration. It specifically stated that the UK government did *“not contemplate that Palestine as a whole should be converted into a Jewish National Home, but that such a Home should be founded in Palestine”*<sup>8</sup> but it also affirmed the right of the Jews to be within Palestine. Furthermore, it introduced certain limits to Jewish immigration.

In 1931, a British Royal Commission known as the Peel Commission was sent to investigate the reasons of the Arab upheaval. Interestingly, it states that the conflict was not *“in its essence an interracial conflict, arising from any old instinctive antipathy of Arabs towards Jews. There was little or no friction, as we have seen, between Arab and Jew in the rest of the Arab world until the strife in Palestine engendered it.”*<sup>9</sup> It went on to find that Arabs’ desire for independence, their dislike for the idea of a Jewish national home in Palestine and the Arabs’ rejection of the Balfour Declaration were some of the main causes fueling the upheaval. It also suggested the partition of Palestine, but this idea was rejected by both Arabs and Jews. Another suggestion made in 1939 for the creation of a unified state was also rejected by the Jews.

After the failing of several proposals and the eruption of violence and terrorism from both sides, the UK decided in 1947 to take the issue to the United Nations which had only just been established. After much debate the General assembly adopted resolution 181 which recommended the partition of Palestine into an Arab and Jewish state and that Jerusalem should be administered by the UN. The Arab population rejected this proposal as, though they still accounted for most of the population, they were given less land than the Jews. They generally regarded it as unjust. On the other hand the Jews accepted, but because the land given to them was less than what they had hoped for, they started “Plan Dalet” which aimed at taking hold of land allocated to Arabs. A Jewish state called Israel was established on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 1948. Following this proclamation several Arab states entered militarily the land allocated to the Arabs by resolution 181. The conflict soon escalated in what is known as the

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<sup>7</sup> "The Palestine Question: A Brief History - Study (1 January 1980)." *United Nations*. United Nations, n.d. Web. 29 Aug. 2019.

<sup>8</sup> The Avalon Project : British White Paper of June 1922, [avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/brwh1922.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/brwh1922.asp).

<sup>9</sup> “British Palestine Mandate.” Text of the Peel Commission Report, [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/text-of-the-peel-commission-report](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/text-of-the-peel-commission-report).

first Arab-Israeli war, in which over half of the Arab population were displaced while Jordan and Egypt took control of the Arab-allocated land that remained. This became known as Nakba. By the time the Security Council had implemented a ceasefire, Israel had taken hold of Western Jerusalem and parts of land that was originally designated for the Arabs. The territory Israel controlled was now marked by the 1949 armistice lines. The same year the *United Nations Relief Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA)* was created. In the 1967 war, also known as the Six Day War, Israel gained control of the remaining territories that resolution 181 of 1947 had designated for the Arab population, Jerusalem as well as the Golan heights from Syria and the Sinai from Egypt. This caused the displacement of approximately half a million Palestinians. During the 1973 war Egypt and Syria took Israel by surprise, invading it on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur. Once again the UNSC called for a ceasefire. Eventually Israel signed a peace treaty with Israel in which it was agreed that in exchange for Egypt's recognition of Israel the latter would withdraw from Sinai, which Egypt would leave demilitarized. Israel also signed a peace treaty with Syria. Quite a few years later a treaty was signed with Jordan. In 2005 Israel also withdrew its troops and several thousand settlers from the Gaza strip. However to this day its relations with its other neighbors remain fraught and many Arab states refuse to recognize Israel as a state.

Ever since the six day War the status of Jerusalem has been a topic of dispute: Israel claims that the whole of Jerusalem is its capital but most countries oppose this view claiming this would be a violation of international law as an annexation of foreign territory. Israel argues that its use of force when occupying Jerusalem was legally justified as it was an act of self-defense in response to the 1948 and 1967 wars which, it says, Arab countries started. In the recent years certain countries have recognized West Jerusalem as Israel's capital and President Trump has also stated that he intends to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Whether such an action would contradict UNSC resolution 478 of 1980, which states that "*Those States that have established diplomatic missions at Jerusalem to withdraw such missions from the Holy City*" <sup>10</sup> has been discussed in the SC.

Another issue in recent years is Israeli settlements, particularly in the West Bank despite the fact that the Security Council has called for this activity to end. The International Court of Justice has issued an advisory opinion that the wall that Israel has built in the West Bank is in violation of international law. Furthermore, it has stated that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are in violation of the fourth Geneva Convention.

In 1974 Arab states recognized the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as the representative of Palestinians and in 2012 Palestine got an observer status in the UN.

Sadly, it does not seem like reconciliation is something that will happen in the near future. Further complicating the situation, political unity is absent within Palestine. Hamas, under whose control the Gaza strip is, is an Islamist organization classified as a terrorist organization by the US, EU and Israel. It refuses to recognize Israel and has been responsible for a series of suicide bombings, balloons attached to explosive devices, weaponizing kites and rocket launches sent from Gaza to Israel. However, it has built hospitals and schools for Palestinians thus gaining their support. On the other hand Fatah, the dominant party of the PLO's policy, focuses on negotiations with Israel but has gained a reputation for being corrupt among

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<sup>10</sup> "S/RES/478 (1980) of 20 August 1980." United Nations, United Nations,

Palestinians. The PLO recognised the right of Israel to exist in 1988 which brought it to clash with Hamas which continued in the coming years to have a tendency to denounce any agreements the PLO had managed to come to with Israel. The long-standing rift between the two parties led to an armed conflict in 2007, shortly after the Hamas triumph in legislative elections. Since then the Gaza strip has been under Hamas control and multiple rockets and suicide bombings have been launched from there into Israel which has responded violently. In combination with the intifadas, a series of uprisings against Israel which turned into bloody clashes, the Israeli-Palestinian relations worsened even more. Since Hamas came into control of the Strip, it has been placed under Israeli blockade. Egypt has also kept the border with Gaza closed. Today living conditions in Gaza are poor with power cuts almost daily, poverty, overpopulation and limited amounts of food and medical supplies. This has made the peace process considerably harder and though there have been multiple reconciliation efforts between the two parties they repeatedly collapse after certain periods of time.

### Situation in Syria (Idlib)

In 2011, triggered by the Arab Spring, protests erupted in Syria demanding the resignation of President Bashar al Assad. The violent way in which they were oppressed, including the killing of several demonstrators, combined with the general disenchantment with social and economic conditions and foreign intervention led to armed conflict. At one point there may have been approximately a thousand rebel groups some of which are terrorist groups such as ISIL and Al Qaeda.<sup>11</sup>

It is believed by many that Turkey, Jordan, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have provided weapons to the opposition but the mentioned countries have denied those allegations. The US also agreed to provide military aid to certain rebels after the use of chemical weapons for which Assad is believed by many to be responsible for. The UK and France also support the opposition. Assad's government is backed by Iran, the Hezbollah (a designated terrorist group by several countries in Lebanon alongside with Russia and China.

Despite the presence of foreign military, because they claim to be fighting terrorist groups, the war in Syria is classified as a civil war, meaning that concerning the Geneva Conventions only common article three applies, which calls for the minimum rights of civilians to be protected. Unfortunately, Syria has not ratified the Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions which refers to civil wars nor is it party to the Rome Statute. However, the human rights treaties it is party to are still applicable.

Opponents of the Syrian regime see Assad as a violent and brutal human rights oppressor who goes against the principals of democracy. They accuse him of using chemical weapons and committing war crimes. Interestingly the Syrian government and its allies appear to have a different point of view: they accuse the international coalition led by the US for providing military support to terrorists, promoting regime change and criticized Turkey for violating Syria's sovereignty and training and arming terrorists. They also say Syria has been framed for

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<sup>11</sup> "Guide to the Syrian Rebels." *BBC News*. BBC, 13 Dec. 2013. Web. 29 Aug. 2019.

the use of chemical weapons. Amnesty International says that both parties to the conflict have committed violations of humanitarian law.

Currently the government has seized back most of Syria and it looks like its victory is near, with Idlib and surrounding areas being the last stronghold of opposition and several jihadist groups. Many civilians moved to the province after the fall of areas previously held by opposition, some in fact were forcibly displaced after evacuation deals with the government. Since January it has HTS, a jihadist alliance and terrorist organization violently seized control of the area from other rebel groups. In 2018 a truce was agreed between the presidents of Russia and Turkey which established a demilitarized buffer zone, demanded the withdrawal of jihadists as well as heavy weapons including tanks and missile systems from the zone. This has not been fully implemented.

The majority of the displaced population is living in dire conditions, with displacement camps being overcrowded and many people living in open fields depending on cross-border aid from Turkey. With the Turkish border being closed following HTS taking control of the area, and the fear of imprisonment should rebels go back to a government-controlled territory, the population of Idlib is effectively trapped there. Though the Syrian government and Russia have announced they have created two humanitarian corridors, rebels fear prosecution. To make things worse, according to Amnesty International, hospitals are being intentionally bombed by the Syrian government.

The conflict in Syria poses a threat to the whole of the Mediterranean. Apart from the refugee crisis it has caused, it has become a hub for terrorist activities. Finally, illicit arms trafficking takes place posing another security challenge to the Mediterranean.

### Other Security Challenges

Meanwhile the Mediterranean faces many more security challenges. In Libya a civil war has broken out following the ousting of Gaddafi with several rival factions competing over power. The Cyprus issue remains yet to be resolved and negotiations are extremely slow. Apart from human trafficking, illicit drug and weapons trafficking are also issues of concern. Terrorism remains a big threat with several terrorist groups causing instability in Iraq, Tunisia, Syria, Libya and Egypt. These groups often use organized crime as a means for funding their activities whilst other times they collaborate with organized-crime groups. Finally they are responsible for the purchase of illicit weapons.

## CAUSES

Human Trafficking: The displacement of people due to various reasons leaves people vulnerable to being trafficked. According to the UNODC "Political instability, militarism, civil unrest, internal armed conflict and natural disasters may result in an increase in trafficking".<sup>12</sup> In the Mediterranean a series of conflicts has caused many people to flee for their lives. This, combined with the lack of organization of authorities and the instability in many regions

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<sup>12</sup>UNODC "Addressing the Root Causes of Trafficking." N.p., n.d. Web.

impairing monitoring, elevate the risk of human trafficking. Further complicating the situation people may start off being smuggled only to be manipulated into a more coercive situation during their journey and thus end up being victims of trafficking.

Israel - Palestine conflict: The conflict between Israel and Palestine has multiple roots. To fully understand the conflict, one must also understand the people involved in it. For the Jews, the horrors of anti-Semitism which peaked during the Second World War cannot be forgotten and perhaps they believe that in the case of a mass prosecution in the future, Israel will be a safe refuge. From the Palestinian viewpoint, the loss of land they believed to be theirs is a bitter injustice and the grief for the many who have been killed in the conflict is overwhelming. The conflict has been going on for so long that for many Israelis and Palestinians long term peace and stability is not something they have experienced, but on the contrary they have grown up in a climate of anger, fear and resentment. The dispute over Jerusalem can be explained by the religious significance of the city to both Arabs and Jews. Water “politics” are another factor behind the territorial disputes.

Syria: The Causes of the conflict are many and have their routes in social and economic issues as well as foreign intervention. First, it is important to understand that in Syria minorities constitute approximately 25% of the population.<sup>13</sup> With Assad himself being from the Alwite minority, his government gives a sense of protection to smaller ethnic groups, which they fear losing should Assad fall. Furthermore, people were dissatisfied with the long-term oppression of human rights and corruption. Another factor in the conflict is the Sunni-Shia rivalry which generally influences politics in the middle east (Alwites are often seen closer to Shia Islam). For Iran and the Hezbollah in Lebanon, which both support Shia Islam, a change in government may mean that they lose one of their allies. From Russia’s perspective, the support of the Syrian government’s opposition is an attempt for regime change. Turkey sees the conflict as an opportunity to fight against the Kurds which adds to the confusion as they are backed by the US in their fight against IS.

## SOLUTIONS

The solutions you will propose should of course represent your country’s interest and policies.

Human trafficking: Regarding human trafficking there is a general consensus that transnational cooperation, stricter law enforcement and monitoring could go a long way to tackling the issue.

Syria: In Syria the implementation of the ceasefire in Idlib may be something you want to advocate as well as means for the necessary humanitarian aid to be provided.

Israel-Palestine conflict: The two-state solution is widely discussed, that is the creation of two states as proposed in resolution 181 for the Israel-Palestine conflict but probably is not

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<sup>13</sup> "Guide: Syria's Diverse Minorities." *BBC News*. BBC, 09 Dec. 2011. Web. 29 Aug. 2019.



something that can happen in the near future. Reconciliation efforts and peace talks are possible proposals.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America (U.S.A.): one of Israel's greatest allies which has used its veto power multiple times to defend its allies interests

Russia: It has cast its veto power several times when resolutions on this topic have been debated in the SC and go against the interests of the Assad regime.

The International Committee of the Red Cross : alongside the Syrian Arab Red Crescent it has provided lots of much needed humanitarian aid.

France: as one of the permanent five members in the SC but also the only Mediterranean country within the Council, it should have an active role in the debate.

Italy: Though not a current member in the SC it was the country to convene the meeting " Security Challenges in the Mediterranean Region" which prompted the Secretary General to speak to the Council about this issue.

Kuwait : Kuwait is currently a member of the SC that does not recognize Israel.

Indonesia: Indonesia is a current member of the SC that does not recognize Israel.

## UN INVOLVEMENT

Human Trafficking: Some Relevant conventions and resolutions are (S/RES/2331(2016) which condemns human trafficking, and the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons

Israel – Palestine Conflict: The UN has carefully followed the conflict and has established the UN Special Committee on Palestine, the UN Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The issue has also been discussed several times at the SC and GA . The ICJ has also given an advisory opinion (therefore not legally binding) on the Israeli wall.

Syria: The UN has closely monitored the situation in Syria and has called for the respect of human rights. The issue has also been discussed multiple times at the SC and GA. A total of 23

resolutions have been adopted in total which have some relevance to Syria since 2012 by the Security Council. The WHO and UNICEF alongside other UN bodies have also been involved.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- When in dispute on whether it is the UNSC role to make certain decisions, it is worth referring to the UN Charter.
- UNSC resolutions : <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions-0>
- UNSC-vetoed resolutions : [www.research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick/](http://www.research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick/)

It is worth looking at relevant vetoed resolutions particularly if the country you represent has drafted it or vetoed it.

Try noticing the different perspectives when reading articles. For instance Al Jazeera an Arab newspaper presents the Palestinian perspective. In contrast the Jewish Council for Public Affairs or the Jewish Virtual Library present the Israeli Perspective. For the situation in Syria look at governmental websites such as the US Department of State to gain insight into the policy of the US led coalition. If you want to find out about the Syrian regime's policy take a look at the Syrian Arab News Agency. Finally it is worth reading speeches that have been made at the UN.

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