

# ISRAEL'S INFLUENCE ON THE PALESTINIAN PROTECTION GAP

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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Submitted to the LAUNCH: Undergraduate Research office at  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the designation as an

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOLAR

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May 2021

Major: International Studies, International Politics and Diplomacy Track

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# ABSTRACT

Israel's Influence on the Palestinian Protection Gap

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The unique situation of Palestine not being considered a state creates a rare situation for refugees who are thereby stateless and processed as such. Through this project, I explore how Palestinian refugees are impacted by the framework the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) holds as well as evaluate the impact of the international community on their protection. I evaluate the potential impact of Israel's system of international alliances with respect to the limitations of the protection granted to Palestinian refugees. If a significant protection gap is found, what role did Israel, other nations, as well as the international refugee regime play? How have the problems been addressed, if at all? This is an important research question as refugees already lack the agency to reside in the homeland of their choice, only made more complicated by an incompatible framework and lack of adherence to international law. To help them, the UN created two agencies; yet both have encountered significant constraints due to

the structure of the international regime. The protection of refugees has now always focused on their security rather than towards the asylum process. The rise of Israel also resulted in further limitation to Palestinian refugees' rights, such as the principle of repatriation supposedly supported by International Refugee Law. It seems as if without a nation-state to support them, these Palestinians are uniquely left unprotected due to the socio-political climate of the international community. This has left agencies meant to protect these refugees underfunded and unemployed due to lack of support. Being allies with Israel deters nations from supporting the biggest security threat Israel faces — Palestinian refugees. The lack of support from nation-states have allowed for these issues to prevail for over half a century as the Arab nations have failed to offer permanent residence to these refugees or push for reworking the system. I explore this aspect of the issue to find adequate suggestions for the framework. This will lead to recommendations for integral changes to the agencies created for aiding Palestinian refugees. My objective for this project is to explore how the recognition of Israel as a state has led to a lack of international support for Palestinians seeking refuge.

## **DEDICATION**

*To my friends who kept me sane, my family that supported me at every step, and my professors for continuing to inspire and guide me through my academic career. Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do for me.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **Contributors**

I would like to thank my faculty advisor, Dr. Maddalena Cerrato, and my secondary advisor, Dr. C. Silva Hamie for their guidance and support throughout the course of the research and writing for this thesis.

Thanks also go to my friends, colleagues and the department faculty for continuing to support me through my academic career.

Finally, thanks to my family for their encouragement, patience and love.

### **Funding Sources**

No funding was received for this thesis.



# INTRODUCTION

## **Main Issue**

After the creation of Israel, many Palestinians displaced from their homeland have become stateless due to Palestine's current lack of national sovereignty. To help them, the UN created two agencies; yet both have encountered significant constraints due to the structure of the international regime. The protection of refugees now focuses on their security rather than towards the asylum process. The rise of Israel also resulted in limitation to Palestinian refugees' rights, such as the principle of repatriation which is supported by International Refugee Law. Palestinians are uniquely left unprotected due to the socio-political climate of the international community, with agencies meant to protect these refugees underfunded and unemployed due to lack of support. Being allies with Israel deters nations from supporting the biggest security threat Israel faces — Palestinian refugees.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Using Hannah Arendt's work, the *Decline of the Nations State and End of Rights of Man in The Origins of Totalitarianism* (2017), I base my work on the idea of statelessness. While Arendt discusses statelessness to question the framework the League of Nations used to deal with minorities in Europe, I use it to identify the deficiency of international institutions such as UNHCR and UNRWA in addressing issues faced by refugees by enforcing international refugee law. As written by Arendt, the minorities in a state are any ethnic group not living in their own national state. Nation states disapprove of having a population consistent of multiple nationalities, rather focusing on the majority in attempts to maintain homogeneity. The minority became stateless, with states unwilling to accept them inside their borders. If accepted, they are

not given equal rights and continue to be overlooked. The only way one is entitled to receive human rights is by belonging to a sovereign state. Therefore, when someone is deprived of national rights, they are also deprived of human rights. This allows nations to provide rights on their own terms, superseding the basic human rights outlined by the United Nations, allowing it to be a part of national strategy. Resultantly, nations use their tradition, religion and culture to further ignore minorities. When special human rights are granted, minorities are no longer under state protection, relieving the nation-state of their responsibility (Bandow). While no regime could take away “inalienable” rights, none would guarantee them either as rights are premised on national sovereignty (Gratton). Inalienable rights are only enjoyed by the citizens of prosperous nations. The rightless no longer have the ability to belong anywhere (Gratton). Being a human is now about belonging to a political community. This idea allows me to further explain Israel’s role in limiting Palestinian refugee protection by limiting their rights, cutting off other nations from supporting them and attempting to end the only agency providing them with any form of assistance.

## **Outline**

The thesis is organized with the first section mapping out the conflict and the side of the various UN agencies employed for Palestinian refugees. This leads me to their mandate and financial limitations, pointing out their impact on the protection of these refugees. Through this, I also explain the impacts the international community has had by withdrawing funding and their treatment of refugees. I highlight the various protection gaps that Palestinian refugees face and how they arise from the international community’s solidarity with Israel and/or the fear of overstepping its national sovereignty, by analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data. Using this, I attempt to consolidate recommendations for a framework that addresses these issues and

enforces international law and human rights for Palestinian refugees regardless of the socio-political issues that are deliberated.

I have written my thesis based on a mix of existing qualitative and quantitative data, based on the number of refugees in various countries, funding patterns as well as looking at statements by nations and the international community. I use UNRWA to explore the qualitative data, while turning to news sources and press statements for my qualitative data. This was the most suitable approach to answering my research question as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the different factors contributing to the protection gap. I do explore the last half of the 20th century to present, but my focus is more towards how the international community has taken a step back from finding a durable solution in the 21st century. Analyzing the data collected, I point out general trends and their implications. While the methodology used can produce results that are difficult to understand, it provides for a more in-depth understanding of the connections in actions of the international community.

### **Key Terms**

A refugee is a person who has crossed an international frontier because of a well-founded fear of persecution (Shacknove). They would have been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. They could be persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group (United Nations). This differs from an internally displaced person, or IDP, who is someone who has been forced to flee their home but did not cross an international border. They are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid because they are legally under the protection of their own government (United Nations). An asylum seeker is a person who left their country and applied

for asylum in another country to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal protection and assistance. They must demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution (United Nations).

In this thesis, the category of statelessness plays a particularly important role. A person who is stateless is someone that thereby has no claims and is not legally protected by any country. They are not a citizen of any country and could have become stateless due to reasons that are sovereign, legal, technical or administrative in nature (United Nations). For this thesis, a nation is a particular kind of ethnic community that assumes the principle of nationalism. A state is an organized political community based on the principles of territoriality and sovereignty. It will have specific borders and the power to control that area. A nation-state is when a political unit and national unit are congruent and work within the same boundaries, which is recognized as an important aspect of the Palestinian refugee problem as Israel becomes the nation-state, and the Palestinians living within the borders are just a minority. Nationality and citizenship refer to the legal bond between a government and an individual, and allows for certain political, economic, social, and other rights of the individual, as well as the responsibilities of both government and citizen.

The key UN agencies involved are the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). UNCCP is an agency dedicated to creating a resolution for the Palestinian refugees. UNHCR is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights, and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people (UNHCR). UNRWA was established by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302 for providing assistance to Palestinian refugees (UNRWA).

## **Research Question and Thesis**

In this thesis, I explore the potential impact of Israel's system of international alliances with respect to the limitations of the protection granted to Palestinian refugees. If a significant protection gap is found, what role did Israel, other nations, as well as the international refugee regime play? How have the problems been addressed, if at all? I argue that the world's acceptance and growing support of Israeli national sovereignty has also brought about the demise of Palestinian refugee protection. Such a decline of Palestinian refugee protection emerges through their prolonged stateless condition, the gap in the protection mandate, the failure to enforce international refugee law, and the curbed funding to UNRWA.

## **Literature Review**

This section maps the overall state of the scholarship in regard to the protection Palestinian refugees receive. In UNHCR and the International Protection of Palestinian Refugees, Brenda Goodard examines the limitations of Article 1D, which is used to exclude Palestinian refugees from UNHCR protection since they are receiving assistance from UNRWA. She also highlights how one of the two agencies created to address the Palestinian refugee situation has no ability to achieve its mission, since the UNCCP just exists on paper, as it has no funds or employees (Goodard). Noura Erakat, in *Palestinian Refugees and the Syrian Uprising*, continues this discussion and points out that the yearly report sent to the UN by the UNCCP states there is nothing new to report, and the UN has not addressed this apparent gap in protection despite these reports (Erakat). *Relived Vulnerabilities of Palestinian Refugees* by Maissaa Almustafa takes a closer look at the agencies and the lack of services provided to these refugees in camps as well as the limitations they face in terms of employment and education due to restrictions by the state of residence, rather than the international agencies (Almustafa). In *The*

(Relative) Decline of Palestinian Exceptionalism, Michael Kagan discusses how Palestinian refugees are not a unique situation and are receiving aid similar to other groups, but that international refugee law, repatriation, is still not being addressed in the case of Palestinian refugees. In his other article, *Is There Really a Protection Gap?*, Kagan states that UNRWA has closed the gap it faced in protection due to its original mandate but continues to carry out tasks that should be under the responsibility of Arab host states, emphasizing the need for a durable solution, general welfare protection and individual protection (Kagan). While the work of these scholars helps us better understand the situation faced by Palestinian refugees, they fail to explore the implications of an Israeli alliance on funding and protection of UNRWA and Palestinian refugees, which is my intended goal for this thesis.

## 1. HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

This section demonstrates the timeline of Palestinians becoming refugees, by first explaining the historical relevance of refugees and then highlighting important points in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The term refugee was coined during the Protestant persecution in France under King Louis XIV (Porzucki). The latest statistics claim that there are currently 79.5 million individuals that have been displaced due to persecution, conflict, or human rights violations, a record high. This consists of 26 million refugees, 45.7 million IDPs, and 4.2 million asylum seekers (UN). Two-thirds of the people that have been displaced since the beginning of the 20th century come from just five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Additionally, refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than their non-refugee peers. In 2018, 3.4 million out of 7.1 million refugee children were enrolled in primary or secondary school; but more than half did not attend (UN).

Until 1948, Palestine was the geographic region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, much of which is now Israel. Following World War One, this region was handed from the Ottoman Turks to the British who controlled it from 1920 to 1948 under a League of Nations mandate. With the discussion of establishing a Jewish state on this territory, the creation of a sovereign Palestine also began. On one hand, the residents of this area have been called Palestinians since the early 20th century and they believed they were promised this land by the Allies in exchange for helping defeat the Turks through the McMahon Agreement. However, Britain has since claimed such a promise was not part of the agreement. On the other hand, the Jews believed they had been promised this land through the Balfour Declaration, and as a result,

many Jews migrated here and lived within the Arab majority. Though there was no clarity on which party was promised this land, the two groups lived mostly in harmony under British rule (Trueman). Currently, Palestine includes the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but a complex power dynamic is present. There is no consensus about the borders and the situation is also complicated due to the displacement of these Palestinians (History).

In August 1929, the existing harmony between Jews and Arabs in Palestine dissipated due to the possibility of a Jewish state replacing Palestine. The city of Jerusalem became a site of contention as it had major religious significance to both groups. Jewish immigration continued despite the clashes and this heightened tensions as Arab nationalism also grew within Palestinian Arabs. The British were pushed to the center of conflict as both sides started attacking Britain, but it continued its control of Palestine (Trueman). In 1922, Jews made up around 11% of the population and this number grew to approximately 30% in 1942 (CJPME). In 1947, the United Nations proposed dividing Palestine into two areas, a Jewish Israel and an Arab Palestine. Jerusalem, claimed by both states, became an international territory. The Zionists accepted the plan as the first step towards a Jewish state. Palestinians and the surrounding Arab countries, however, rejected this as they found the distribution of the land unfair since they considered the whole of historic Palestine to be their homeland. They also argued that they represented a majority of the population in the area and should earn more territory. In May 1948, Britain withdrew from the area and Israel immediately declared itself an independent state (History).

The 1948 Arab-Israeli war that followed was an attempt to invalidate the creation of Israel, and involved Israel, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Lebanon. Despite this, Israel was able to control more than two-thirds of the former British mandate by the end of the war in 1949. The conflict started then has transformed to a new dimension with tangled relations and the increase



of displaced persons (History). The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed in 1964 to establish a Palestinian Arab state and is still a prevalent movement today. They agree that Israel's occupation of this land is not legitimate but after the 1993 Oslo Accords, PLO accepted Israel's right to exist in exchange for recognition by Israel of the PLO (History). What followed was the six-day war that began in June 1967. Israel launched an attack on Arab states and prevailed within six days, tripling the amount of land it controlled, including the West Bank, and returned Sinai to Egypt. It still occupies the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights (History). In 1987, the First Intifada happened as Palestinians grew angry over occupation in the Gaza and West Bank. The Peace Process that followed, the Oslo Peace Accords, was an attempt to end the ongoing violence. The first meeting, Oslo I, created a timeline for the peace process and had a plan for the interim Palestinian government in Gaza and West Bank. This agreement was signed and witnessed in 1993 by both sides but it failed to reach the goal of bringing together Israel and Palestine to a peaceful resolution (History). In September 2000, the Second Palestinian Intifada began. The riots, suicide bombings, and other attacks that followed ended the peace process and conflict lasted for five years until the PLO head passed away and Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 (History). The Hamas, a Sunni Islamist militant group, won the Palestinian legislative elections in 2006. Hamas and Israel were involved in multiple bloody wars between 2008 and 2014 (History).

## **2. INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE AGENCIES AND RESETTLEMENT**

There are three main international refugee agencies with mandates that overlap for assistance to Palestinian refugees, but there is a protection gap that these refugees still face since it isn't addressed in the mandate of any of the functioning agencies.

### **2.1 UNHCR Creation and Mandate**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was created in 1950 to help the Europeans displaced due to the Second World War (UNHCR). It was the first international apparatus of its kind to identify and control refugees and has become referred to as the international refugee regime. It contains humanitarian institutions, policies, protocols, and practices that direct the management of displaced people who can no longer be citizens. It has approximately 8,600 employees in 186 countries and is meant to remain apolitical while aiding refugees (Besteman).

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, with 149 state parties, defined the term 'refugee' and described all the rights of refugees and legal obligations of nations for the protection of refugees. It sets the standards for those who do not qualify, such as war criminals, and allows for travel without a visa for those determined to be refugees. The main principle in the convention is non-refoulement which states that a refugee cannot return to a country where they may face threats to life or freedom (Goddard). The UNHCR thereby follows the guidelines listed in the 1951 Convention and 1967 protocol to determine if a person qualifies to be a refugee. It states that:

As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who,

not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (UNHCR)

The only geographic limitation is that the person cannot be from UNRWA's operation location, which will be later discussed, which includes Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank. The protections guaranteed by UNHCR are also taken from the 1951 convention, as UNHCR is a guardian of this convention. It allows the organization to protect and assist refugees in their resettlement by properly identifying them as a refugee, and then finding the means to safely relocate them. Refugees are granted rights outlined in the Convention that includes the right to freedom from torture or degrading treatment, right to freedom of opinion and expression, right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, right to life, liberty, and security, freedom from discrimination and right to asylum. The intention of this mandate is to safely resettle those fleeing their homes by properly protecting and assisting them in all their basic needs (Goddard). It further includes protection against refoulement, building and maintaining quality asylum systems, conducting refugee status determination, upholding the prohibition of arbitrary detention, ensuring safe residence, expanding educational opportunities, and preventing and responding to sexual or gender-based violence (Erakat). Its original mandate was only for three years, reflecting the intentions of the drafters who were mainly interested in finding solutions for the European refugee crisis. Its main donors are Western states, allowing the organization to accommodate their interests as a priority (Almustafa).

## **2.2 UNCCP**

The United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) was created in 1948 to “facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation, and to maintain close relations with the Director of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and, through him, with the appropriate organs

and agencies of the UN.” It was designed to be the protection agency for Palestinian refugees. With the existence of this agency as well as UNRWA, the drafters of the UNHCR mandate excluded refugees from Palestine since they believed they would be protected by UNCCP and aided through UNRWA. They believed that they should be excluded from the framework of the convention since the UN already made special arrangements for them. This led to the creation of Article 1D in the convention. Yet, UNCCP failed to protect refugees because Israel never agreed to the accommodations suggested by the agency. The UNCCP was provided a protection mandate for refugees from Palestine who reside in the areas part of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict. They have failed to protect Palestinian refugees and are an agency with no budget or employees, with their yearly report stating that they have nothing new to report (Goddard). Within two years of their creation, they reported that the conditions in Palestine and Israel make it impossible for the agency to follow its mandate. The UNCCP also did not have political support for its work, allowing it to fail without resistance (Erakat). This displays how the lack of international assistance to find a durable solution for Palestinians is unique to them alone.

### **2.3 UNRWA Creation and Mandate**

Due to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV) established UNRWA to carry out relief and works programs for Palestinian refugees. This resolution recognizes that continued assistance for Palestinian refugees is necessary to prevent starvation, distress, and pursue peace and stability. It officially began its operations on May 1st, 1950. Since there has not been a resolution to the situation, the General Assembly has continued to renew the UNRWA mandate, most recently renewing it till June 30th, 2023 (UNRWA).

This Convention shall not apply to persons who are at present receiving from organs or agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

protection or assistance. When such protection or assistance has ceased for any reason, without the position of such persons being definitively settled in accordance with the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, these persons shall ipso facto be entitled to the benefits of this Convention.

Article 1D of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees recognized that some refugees might find better protection through a separate organization. For this reason, it is regarded to as providing the provisions and guidelines of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) since it was established through this to protect Palestinian refugees. It is looked upon as an exclusion clause but works to exclude and include since it excludes the protection of Palestinian refugees receiving assistance from UNRWA but also includes them once the protection and assistance has ceased. These claimants need to demonstrate that they fall under the provisions of the 1951 Convention. The continuation of protection needed for Palestinians due to their complex situation is also regarded in the provisions. The guidelines provided in Article 1D allow for the protection of Palestinian refugees and address procedural and evidentiary matters (UNHCR). Those receiving assistance by UNRWA are thereby excluded from receiving it from the UNHCR, until a time where that assistance has ceased for any reason, which will make them ipso facto entitled to the benefits of the 1951 convention.

UNRWA thereby was created by transferring the duties and assets of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees to them on April 1st, 1950. It relies upon the assets previously held but also the voluntary contributions to ensure the program can function the way it was intended. It is now funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions from UN Member States. It receives some funding from the Regular Budget of the United Nations that is used mostly for

international staffing costs (UNRWA). The UNRWA agency categorizes someone as a Palestinian refugee if their residence was Palestine between June 1st, 1946 to May 15th, 1948 and lost their home and livelihood due to the 1948 conflict. Descendants of male Palestinian refugees are eligible for this status. The UNRWA can provide services to all who live in its area of operation, meet this definition, are registered with the Agency and need assistance. It should be noted that while the organization provides relief, they can't advocate for Palestinian refugee's civil rights, which differs from UNHCR's mandate which is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees (Chehbouni). Those displaced due to the result of the 1967 conflict are also eligible for services but are not registered as Palestine refugees. Not all Palestinians can fall under the category protected within the Article 1D. UNRWA does not have a mandate to seek solutions, just to assist and provide services to Palestine refugees (UNRWA). UNRWA also does not "register" all people who are eligible to receive assistance yet does keep due records of them. Any person seeking the status of a Palestinian Refugee must provide documentary evidence that meets the guidelines specified, specifically to their or their father's place of residence in Palestine between 1946 and 1948 (Goddard). There have been steps taken since to allow registration of children born to UNRWA-registered refugees based on just their mother's enrollment, eliminating a discriminatory practice (Kagan).

Currently, Palestinians are still fighting for an official state formally recognized by all countries. Some Israelis do continue to settle in areas that are firmly under Palestinian control, but this is not considered illegal internationally as the borders are constantly debated. There are also a group of Israelis who debate the settlement and wish to find a peaceful solution for the land disputes. In May 2017, Hamas presented a formation of Palestine using the 1967 borders and proposing Jerusalem as its capital but failed to recognize Israel as a state and was thereby

rejected. The state of affairs currently is still very tense as the United States works to gather support for Israel and Palestine slowly loses its international support. There is still, however, many people working on creating a resolution that can create peace (History).

Critics state that the Conciliation Commission should facilitate the repatriation and resettlement process with compensation, as it is the primary step the UNHCR takes with all refugees. This resettlement might only be possible if Palestinians agree to settle in other Arab lands, with those Arab nations being willing to open their borders for resettlement (Jewish Virtual Library). There are also hundreds of thousands of Jews who were forced to flee from Arab state before and after the creation of Israel. Many were assimilated into Israel, but no international agency helped them get restitution for property and money taken (Jewish Virtual Library). Israel continues to push for UNRWA's closure, stating that it perpetuates conflict with the Palestinians, while also criticizing that the organization considers descendants eligible for refugee status (Al Jazeera).

A majority of the Palestinian refugees are younger than 34 years old, but the gender divide is equal (Population Reference Bureau). There are many more children that are refugees than elders. The current total of Palestinian refugees worldwide is 7.2 million. 4.3 million were displaced in 1948 and registered for humanitarian assistance with the United Nations. 1.7 million others are also displaced but are not registered with the UN. Approximately 355,000 Palestinians are internally displaced in what is currently recognized as Israel (Al-Awda).

#### **2.4 UNRWA Refugee Resettlement**

It is important to understand the relevant services provided by UNRWA to Palestinian refugees to compare the aid and protection received, or lack thereof. As of June 2020, there were over 6.3 million registered with UNRWA, but not all have used their services. The budget

UNRWA sets is based on the number of refugees using their services, not on the amount registered. The life expectancy of Palestine refugees is similar to that of nationals of host countries. UNRWA does not afford refugee status but provides services and assistance (UNRWA).

For the refugees that are internally displaced within Palestine, the percentage of refugees who suffer from deep poverty is 23% and the poverty percentage among them is higher than the general average. The results of the Labor Force Survey, in 2017, showed that the percentage of employed refugees was 40.3%, while the percentage for non-refugees was 67.9%. The percentage of Palestinian refugees who received a bachelor's degree or higher had reached 18.1% compared to 16.6% for non-refugees (IMEMC News & Agencies).

The refugees that are living in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan under UNRWA have constrained social services provided to them. Since the Arab League has instructed members to deny citizenship to Palestinian refugees, the ability for them to seek citizenship in other Arab nations is limited. These refugees being relocated to Lebanon, Syria, and Gulf States are regarded as second-class citizens. In May 2012, the United States Senate Appropriations Committee defined a Palestinian refugee as only an original Palestine refugee who was actually displaced between June 1946 and May 1948, thereby limiting relocation to only an estimated number of 30,000 refugees (Wiki). There are refugee camps located in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, with some registered refugees living outside the camps as well. In total, UNRWA has 58 camps through 3 nations and 2 regions, and 1,619,936 refugees in the camps (UNRWA).

In 2019, there were 533,000 refugee children attending UNRWA schools, with 3.5 million refugees receiving health care services, and 1.5 million affected by conflict receiving



urgent humanitarian assistance (UNRWA). Through their micro-loan offices, UNRWA distributed over 500,000 loans since 1992, amounting to more than \$500 million. There are also 11 food distribution centers for almost one million beneficiaries (UNRWA).

### **3. PROTECTION GAPS FACED**

There are many protection gaps that Palestinian refugees face due to their inherent stateless status, lack of international support and gaps in mandates. They have seen the collapse of the agency dedicated to their protection (UNCCP), lack of intervention by other agencies and the international community, refusal of human rights recommendations by the UN, and discrimination by host countries, thus creating a unique protection gap that is driven by the socio-political nature of the situation. According to international law, however, the right to nationality, prevention of statelessness, and economic and social rights are protected (Human Rights Watch).

#### **3.1 International Law**

Based on international law, refugees have the right to return to their homes and be compensated for their losses. The durable solutions UNHCR provides in order of priority are voluntary repatriation, then local integration, and finally resettlement (Imseis). In 1972, the Uppsala Declaration stated in the Declaration of the Right to Leave and Return (Articles 9 and 10) that “Every person is entitled to return to the country of which he is a national. No person shall be deprived of his nationality for the purpose of divesting him of the right of return to his country” (Adelman). The UN General Assembly in Resolution 194 (III) of 1948 set guidelines for Palestinian refugees to be repatriated or given compensation if they chose not to return. This resolution did emphasize that only those who wish to live at peace were to be repatriated, displaying their perspective that Israel could not repatriate “hostile” Palestinians without it being a threat to their security. On November 22nd, 1974, Resolution 3236 stated that the right to return to their land of origin is an inalienable right for refugees (Al-Awda). Israel, however, has

not responded positively to requests for accommodation by the UNCCP (Bazirake). The right is a basic right under refugee law, but this matter has become a political negotiation with Israel who has limited their ability to return to their homeland. Legally, Israel has the obligation to repatriate refugees, but they refuse to accept them and there has not been any international backlash for their decision. Ben Gurion, former prime minister of Israel took measures to prevent refugees from returning and identified any who did as infiltrators. Even if they were allowed to return to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, this area only makes up 22% of historic Palestine, so many would not truly be repatriated (Mason). Assuming that Israel's position will not change creates an obstacle to peace and insinuates that these refugees are a unique situation where the standard durable solution is not applicable. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated in 2014 that he would not sign an agreement that did not decline refugee's right to return and Palestinian's acceptance of Israel as a Jewish state (Farah). The leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization, however, have recently demanded a durable solution consistent with the international law and UN resolutions, which has tended to be repatriation (Kagan).

Once they had left their homeland, they remained homeless, once they had left their state, they became stateless; once they had been deprived of their human rights, they were rightless, the scum of the earth (Arendt, 267).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to a nationality (United Nations). The following American Convention on Human Rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child specify that a person receives the nationality of the state they were born in, unless claiming nationality another way. The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness dictates that states cannot deprive a person of his nationality if this would make them stateless or due to their racial, ethnic, religious, or political

grounds (Human Rights Watch). Still, Palestinian refugees are limited in their ability to seek citizenship in other nations and refugee law has turned into immigration law, emphasizing protection of borders rather than the protection of people. The system has been set up to affirm the legitimacy of an international order where everyone belongs somewhere, but this is set up to maintain inequality, disempower refugees, and protect the borders of the global north. It has protected the global system of national sovereignty by using containment and monitoring of individuals, rendering individuals stateless and threatening territorial sovereignty (Besteman). Many in the international realm do not even address Israel's part in the refugee crisis, displaying their loyalty to their alliances over the international human rights of those suffering for over half a century now. While the UN claims that this crisis can and should be solved, its actions are not representative of this sentiment (Kagan).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also states that everyone has the right to own property (Human Rights Watch), but many are prohibited from the right of property ownership as well as participation in many professions, such as medicine and law if they do not have access to social security plans. This largely limits the economic opportunities available to these refugees, even if they are not repatriated, forcing them to be dependent on the very finite resources provided by the state (Almustafa). They face great difficulties to even just open bank accounts. Creating identity and travel documents is especially a hardship on these refugees, undermining their ability to move freely and also impeding their ability to express themselves freely. Many nations, including some Arab states, refuse to recognize documents provided by host countries and actively prevent them from entering their territory (Gabiam). International Law allows an individual to participate in the political affairs of their nation after they return but due to the absence of a peace treaty, this also does not apply to them (Rempel). These

Palestinians, due to their stateless nature, have been left in the hands of assistance programs that have no protection mandate, leaving them with no access to the legal frameworks of international protection, and has yet to provide them with an effective alternative protection structure.

### **3.2 Issues with International Institutions**

The United Nations in Resolution 2334, in 2016, reaffirmed that Israel was violating international law with its occupation of East Jerusalem and thereby being a hindrance to peace and the possibility of a two-state solution. It demanded Israel cease occupation and respect its obligations (United Nations Security Council). Israel has not responded to the demands of this resolution and continues to occupy East Jerusalem. The UN has accepted Israel as a member state (Farah), displaying slight bias in the situation. The UN has continued to fall short of international law, prolonging the refugee crisis.

UNRWA's mandate faces many gaps in protection due to its structure. UNRWA is a humanitarian organization and has no authority to seek solutions, such as resettling refugees or allowing the right of return (UNRWA). It excludes refugees who left Palestine after 1948, except for those displaced in 1967. Other exclusions address those who did not continually live in Palestine for at least two years before 1948, as well as those who claim refugee status through their mother (Irfan). These refugees also have to pay fees for comfortable and quicker travel (Bazirake). Additionally, the UN tended to focus on funding UNRWA, rather than solving the issues leading to the creation of refugees (Kagan), such as by attending to the limitations of the UNCCP. UNRWA and UNHCR did recently release a statement claiming that "UNRWA provides a measure of protection to Palestine refugees in its area of protection" (Kagan). UNRWA has developed its protection in the specific realm of promoting general welfare to large groups of Palestinian refugees (Kagan). With the coronavirus pandemic, there are many claims

that the agency is not sanitizing the camp, linking it to the donor fatigue the organization has seen along with the investigation into the agency that brought up American and Israeli criticism (Ganeyeh).

The UNCCP was designed to protect Palestinian refugees whereas UNRWA was created to provide assistance. The protection for these refugees has stopped with the failure of UNCCP. Article 1D still excludes these refugees since they are receiving aid from UNRWA and are within their area of operation. Receiving aid from one organization is inherently taking them away from receiving protection from another since the ipso facto entitlement to the 1951 benefits are not triggered. Paragraph 7(c) of the UNHCR statute supports the idea that as long as assistance or protection is provided, UNHCR does not have to step in to provide the benefits of the 1951 convention (Goddard). Focusing on the language that states “or,” with the Palestinian refugees receiving assistance and limited protection, they are not entitled to receiving UNHCR protection. Due to this, there is no active international organization pursuing solutions for the Palestinian refugees to provide them with the protection they need (Irfan). They have highlighted the need for a solution but have not taken the necessary steps to follow through with a durable solution, as it is not in the mandate for UNRWA, only the UNCCP which is a superficial agency.

The UNHCR also does not have a clear record of Palestinian refugees living outside the UNRWA operation, who would thereby fall into their mandate. There are 500,000 Palestinians living in Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia that UNHCR is not familiar with and has recognized the need to protect. This is also because UNHCR’s mandate to provide international protection to Palestinian refugees has not always been recognized (Goddard).

### **3.3 Role of the International Community**

Nations often value political gains over moral ones, evident in the reaction of Arab nations as well as those elsewhere in the world. Palestinian refugees receive different standards of treatment depending on the policies of the host country, but they are all at a much lower standard than they should be. These nations defend their actions by stating that improving protection and living standards would strip them of their right to return. States also do not interpret the 1951 Convention as a continuation of protection for these refugees who have left UNRWA's area of operation. They do not recognize that regardless of which mandate they fall under; Palestinian refugees should have better international protection (Goddard). Many Palestinian refugees must seek health care that cannot be provided by aid organizations. Families living in extreme poverty are twice as likely to have family members with disabilities, chronic illness, and poorer mental health (Anera). Furthermore, the Arab states only contributed approximately 2% of the UNRWA budget, displaying the lack of political will behind their decisions (Bard).

Libya under Qaddafi manipulated the Palestinian refugees to fit their needs by giving and restricting aid as they saw fit (Goddard). In Egypt, Palestinian unions do not have a representative role, and the union limited to wage laborers, taxi drivers, or farmers to renew their residency. Since they are outside the area of operations of UNRWA, and UNHCR services are limited here, they do not have access to humanitarian or development programs except health care provided by mosques (el-Abed). There is also a politicization of Palestinian refugees. The link between the Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood is viewed as very close, limiting Palestinians access to services such as education and health care and impacting their living conditions (Almustafa). Syria has many Palestinian refugees, but they are socioeconomically disadvantaged,

and many have been displaced due to the Syrian civil war. These refugees have not been accepted as refugees in other nations limiting their ability to resettle (Almustafa). Approximately 91% of those living in Syria live in absolute poverty (Global Affairs Canada).

Lebanon feared that Palestinian refugees would threaten their ethnic balance, so they enacted a policy of oppression and exclusion, resulting in them to being confined to refugee camps, subject to harsh guidelines, and being banned from working in certain occupations (Mason). In the Lebanese camps, the refugees suffer poverty, overcrowding, unemployment, poor housing conditions, and lack of infrastructure. They live in places with open channels of sewage with deteriorated water and sewage treatment systems, along with houses overcrowded by family. Xenophobic rhetoric is seen in their legal restrictions as well as in public statements of Lebanese politicians (Almustafa). The nation denies these refugees civil rights (Shamieh), to the point that UNRWA launched a program titled 'Dignity for All' to raise awareness of these challenges, as 66% of Palestine refugees live below the poverty line (UNRWA). Only 38% of Palestinians able to work are employed in Lebanon (Anera). A study into the lives of refugees in Lebanon found a "positive association between chronic illness and water leakage [in the refugees' homes], while poorer mental health, in particular, was associated with crowded housing, water leakage, and [poverty]" (Bossone). Approximately 89% are in critical need of sustained humanitarian assistance (Global Affairs Canada). Palestinians can also only pass nationality through the father, making children born to Lebanese women married to Palestinians stateless (Human Rights Watch). Even the Palestinians born in Lebanon are categorized as foreigners, refugees, or stateless people (Al-Arian).

With the recent COVID-19 pandemic, preliminary data indicates that Palestinian refugees are three times more likely to die from the coronavirus than the population as a whole (Middle



East Monitor). While most are immunocompromises, the living conditions of the camp make the situation worse as refugees have to go out to work, putting themselves at risk, since they can't afford to stay at home (Middle East Monitor).

Jordan has provided the 1948 refugees with Jordanian citizenship periodically threaten to revoke Palestinian's citizenship (Mason), and has recently revoked it from Palestinian authority officials (Helmhold). Under Jordan's 1954 nationality law, Palestinian residents of the West Bank were to receive Jordanian nationality, but this has been withdrawn from thousands of these citizens. This withdrawal impacts education, drivers' licenses, residency permits, employment, and travel (Human Rights Watch). They can also revoke their passport if they travel to the West Bank or marry someone from there. Due to this, thousands are stateless within Jordan, without any previous notice or procedure to appeal the decision. This statelessness causes them to lose basic rights such as the right to education, social security, work, health, public life, family reunification, and right to property (Shamieh). Jordan does not recognize Palestinians coming from Syria as refugees, nor are they able to receive assistance from the UNHCR due to the geographic constraints of the mandate, forcing them to live without assistance and relief programs. They also do not have a legal status in the nation, which restrains them from working or receiving social services from Jordan (Almustafa).

The Global North focuses on Israel as being the home to democracy and liberal values and largely ignores the injustices Palestinians incur. The nations under international law are also not legally obliged to accept a refugee permanently on their land (Mason).

Israel has used the Partition Plan (Resolution 181) to defend its ethnic cleansing of Palestine, by twisting the resolution and expanding upon the territory dictated (Farah). It has denied these refugees basic human rights by designing the situation as a way to avoid imposing

nationalization, in essence preserving the identity of refugees. The right of return is contingent on the right of self-determination, but since they cannot express that right due to lack of Palestinians in their own land, both rights are failed to be provided (Barclay). Through the Law of Return of 1950 and Citizenship Law of 1952, Jews around the world are given the status of nationals and allowed to immigrate to Israel and allowing Palestinians who remained in Israel to become citizens, excluding those that may have lived prior to its declaration of statehood, allowing any who attempted to return to be criminalized. After the 1967 war, Israel took a census even though a third of the population was displaced, claiming anyone not there than to not be authorized. Those in Gaza and West Bank were given a different Israeli identification card that ruled the territory under Israeli military regime while those living in East Jerusalem were a part of Israeli domestic law. While governed by Israel, the West Bank and Gaza were considered residence abroad, so those born here could not acquire Israeli citizenship, whereas Israeli children could obtain it just by being Jewish (Nuseibah).

Palestinians makeup 20% of Israel's current population, about one million people, and do have Israeli citizenship. This state provided citizenship does limit their ability to travel to Palestine and does not secure their ability to travel to other Arab countries (Gabiam). Even if Palestine was able to offer citizenship, this comes with no benefits to refugees as they are not able to protect these citizens. There are systemic Israeli policies that encourage Jewish settlement, leading more Palestinians to be displaced (Barclay). Israel informed UNRWA in 2010 to expect tightening of restrictions between East Jersulaem and West Bank, not only impacting their operations but also Palestinian freedom. Those in Gaza, are isolated, and greatly impacted due to the dilapidated infrastructure of public services, destructed economy, and blockade (Grandi). These urban and country planning policies encourage a Jewish majority and

greatly limit Palestinians to a minority by even demolishing homes and villages as illegal constructions. This leads to deportations, on top of forced evictions from places of residence, as other cities are essentially suffocated due to the Separation Wall (Nuseibah).

Israel has been applauded for its vaccine campaign, vaccinating 10% of their 9 million citizens by January. Palestinian refugees, living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip, as well as the health care workers living there have been excluded from those efforts. UNRWA will have to rely on Operation COVAX to get its health care workers and the refugees vaccinated, which is further limited by their funding cuts in 2020 that didn't allow them to pay their staff in time (Kumar).

The United States, undeniably Israel's biggest ally, has increasingly attempted to dissolve UNRWA. Collaborating with Israel, it has been promoting defunding or merging it with UNHCR, a clear attempt to stray focus from Palestine. In the US House Budget Committee meeting in 2013 as well as in front of the UN in 2015, there was a continued campaign against UNRWA, questioning their true intentions and implying that they are the reason for the continued plight of Palestinian refugees (Suleiman). Former President Donald Trump, in 2017, recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, a serious point of contention within the peace process. The Trump administration cut \$200 million in aid in 2018 that was meant to be for Palestinian aid in the West Bank and Gaza, followed by John Bolton, then national security advisor, stating UNRWA was a failed mechanism. The State Department, in 2018, released \$65 million to the agency but withheld the remaining allocated in the budget, followed by statements by Jared Kushner that its part of their plan to compel Palestinian leadership to abandon demands for right of return (Wong). While UNRWA does face problems in protecting their refugees, they certainly are not the reason behind the crisis and implying that they are is an apparent bid at disassociating

the role Israel played in it. If UNRWA was unable to make up for the missing funding, it loses a significant contribution that is vital to carrying out its assistance programs, effectively handicapping the agency. This possibility, combined with the United States' continued attempts to merge the UNRWA mandate to that of the UNHCR, is a significant threat facing the agency. UNRWA would have to urge the UN to create a permanent budget, which would have to be approved by the General Assembly in order to ensure a stable inflow of funding.

In September 2018, the Trump administration cut \$25 million intended for the East Jerusalem Hospital Network and \$10 million for a program that encouraged exchanges between Palestinians and Israelis. In 2012, aid to Palestinians reached \$500 million but since then, has overall dropped to approximately \$250 million (Jewish Virtual Library). According to UNRWA's 2019 donor chart, the United States did not send aid to the agency during that fiscal year (UNRWA). Additionally, the United States Congress enacted the Taylor Force Act in March 2018 that suspends assistance to the Palestinian Authority until they stop payments the US consider are directed to acts of terrorism, which follows traditional strategy, but there are additional contingencies added in the act. While many others stepped in to fill the gap, a gap still does exist, leading primary education and health care services to receive cuts (Imseis). With the United States also proposing to limit the category of Palestinian refugees to those displaced between 1946 and 1948, it ignores the generations that have been born throughout that time till now and have limited resources available to them due to their ancestors' displacement. The United States has also claimed that there needs to be an end to the UNRWA mandate in 2020, calling on host nations to take over food services and for the agency to be dissolved (Patel).

By claiming that UNRWA fosters terrorism, leads to dependency, and discourages Palestinians to seek peace (Farah), Israel's key allies delegitimize the one agency currently

working to aid these refugees. An ethics report that came out in 2019 detailing power abuses by top officials in the agency, as well as the retribution for it, continues to link where the international community throws their support. The agency abuses are mainly focused on two people, mentioning a few others in senior management, who was heading the agency but have since left the agency following the report. After news of abuses occurring in the agency, Belgium, Netherlands, and Switzerland suspended their funding. The Trump Administration used this as a way to delegitimize the organization further (Imseis). While UNRWA does have many problematic issues, the fact that an ethics report was created is proof in the accountability of the agency's framework. The allegations listed in the report are also still being reviewed by the UN for veracity (Imseis). In a tweet, then US special envoy to the Middle East stated that "UNRWA's model is broken/unsustainable & based on an endless expanding # of beneficiaries. Palestinians residing in refugee camps deserve much better" (Patel), continuing this perception that the organization was defunded for being broken. Former US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, shared the report, stating that this was exactly why the US stopped their funding (Patel). Additionally, Former advisor to the President, Jared Kushner, urged Jordan to strip the two million Palestinians living in the nation of their refugee status (Hatuqa).

In the United Nations, voting practices indicate that Israel has increasingly voted in coincidence with the United States, from 90.5% in 2005, to 92% in 2018 (Department of State). Israel and the United States voted extremely similarly at the General Assembly in 2018, with 91 same votes and 4 opposite. In 2012, out of the 19 anti-Israel resolutions where Israel voted No, the United States voted the same 100% of the time, and it has consistently been one of the few countries to do so. Overall, the 136 resolutions introduced regarding the status of Palestine received 132 similar 'No' votes, with the other differences being in abstaining from the vote

(Jewish Virtual Library). When UNGA voted in 2013 to name 2014 the “International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People” the vote had 7 against, namely Israel, three Pacific Island Nations, the United States, Australia, and Canada (Abrams). When a draft resolution reached the UNSC that could create two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, in 2014, the United States voted against it, stating that it does not address Israeli security concerns (United Nations Security Council). This goes to display the firm relationship between the two nations, and with the United States being at least a regional hegemon, if not global, links the potential the nation has to influence how nations interact with Palestinian refugees for the sake of protecting their ally. While current President Joe Biden as asserted he will restore aid to Palestinians and restart peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine, there has been no such action at this time (AP News). The Biden administration has reiterated support for Israel and normalization of relations between it and U.A.E., Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco (Ghosh).

As an ally in voting practices and neighbor to the U.S., it is important to also look towards Canada, where in December 2020 the nation pledged \$90 million to UNRWA for Palestinian refugees over the next three years (Global Affairs Canada). However, moving into the nation’s historical treatment of Palestinian refugees, there are more troubling facts. While Canada has chaired the Refugee Working Group of the Middle East Multilateral Peace Process, a group designed to protect Middle Eastern refugees, they haven’t met in several years (Chehbouni). Another ally in voting practices, Australia, used to continually give aid to Palestine, with an additional \$18 million AUG over three years starting in 2010. However, in 2018, Australia stopped aid to Palestine, and later recognized West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (United Nations).

In 2020, the U.S. guided talks between United Arab Emirates and Israel to finalize a normalization accord between the two nations. The same year, U.A.E. drastically reduced its funding for UNRWA, from \$51.8 million in 2018 and 2019 to just \$1 million in 2020. Bahrain followed suit in cutting funds to the organization (AP News). Saudi Arabia has restated its commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative, a 2002 document that planned the normalization of Arab countries' ties with Israel (Najjar). Nations such as Sudan have also had several meetings with Israeli officials in the pursuit of normalization, despite denials of these meetings (Middle East Monitor). This breaks the Arab consensus that stated normalization and recognition will only come after peace process has been completed. The Palestinian authority is against a normalization that doesn't include them as participants in the discussion (Middle East Monitor).

In November and December 2020, UNRWA faced the worst financial crisis in its history, due to the lack of funding and continued services provided in the wake of the pandemic (Al Jazeera). Withholding and decreasing aid to UNRWA has not produced any progress in reconciliation, and comes at the expense of Palestinian refugees

#### 4. ANALYSIS

*The fact that UNRWA still exists today is an illustration of the failure of the parties and the international community to resolve the issue politically – and one cannot deflect the attention onto a humanitarian organization. (Pierre Krahenbuhl, UNRWA)*

When Israel declared itself a state, the disapproval followed by action in the international community was limited to the Arab nations. Their support for Palestinians essentially dissipated by the end of the 20th century. In recent times, there have been even more alliances between Israel and the Arab world. Egypt, Jordan as well as Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates have all begun diplomatic relations with the nation, largely sponsored and fostered by the United States. While recognition of Israel is not an issue, it does naturally bring about the lack of support of Palestine and its refugees. The United States has certainly launched a campaign against the one agency created to assist Palestinians. The treatment of refugees in Jordan, as well as their recent revocation of nationality, can also be suspicious, while an undeniable link could not be determined at the time of this thesis. International institutions such as the United Nations accepting Israel as a member state leads to the invalidation of their place in prolonging the refugee crisis and ignoring international law by an agency that is inherently meant to remain apolitical.

As Arendt has discussed in her work, the protection of human rights has now become contingent on their nationality and this citizenship can many times be the only guarantee of protection. Universal human rights have lost their universality as these Palestinians will not get any protection until they belong. With Israel neglecting repatriation, and host nations such as



Jordan and Lebanon unwilling to provide nationality in order to maintain their homogeneity, the Palestinian refugee plight continues, and generations are born into statelessness. With their stateless status and the lack of international support, their protection wavers based on the political strategy of nations. If the Palestinian refugee crisis is not an issue to nations such as the United States, it will not find justice through the applicability of international law. While UNRWA certainly has its fair share of problems, specifically looking at the protection mandate gap, the repairing of these is driven by political will. If the international community does not see the value in addressing the protection gap, it certainly will not get taken care of. With more and more nations slowly backing away from UNRWA, contributing to the investigation within the agency, the one organization designed to help Palestinians loses its ability to do so. The increased speculation about the agency's abilities have only brought it more problems as funding decreases but the budget continues to rise in attempts to address the updated socio-political context with the crises in the Middle East and the recent pandemic. Additionally, since the rights are claimed to be provided and protected by UNRWA, host nations and the international community wash their hands of securing these rights for the refugees, placing the burden on international institutions. The logic stated behind this is that the moment they do provide these refugees rights, they cannot be repatriated, and the host nations do not want to risk that. They also do not participate in encouraging the right to repatriation within the dialogue of peace talks. Thereby rights are no longer inalienable, but falter with the political climate. These refugees have no nation guaranteeing rights nor do they have any international agency protecting them, resultantly stuck as a pawn to be used and discarded as a nation sees fit.

Funding cuts and meaningless international statements that claim dissolving the UNRWA agency will fix the situation point to the bias in the international community, specifically visible

within Israeli allies such as the United States. They overlook the conditions these refugees face in host nations, simplifying the solution to being possible just by these host countries providing food services. This disregards international law, that is signed and ratified by a majority of nations, that states the right to return, nationality, property, life, and social rights to be inalienable for all humankind.

While some issues regarding agencies, such as the initial eligibility for refugee status depending on male descendants, have been addressed, several others that are more severe have never found the platform for discourse and change. The one agency designed to protect Palestinians has been disregarded and never discussed since. The fact that the UNCCP has not yet been replaced or funded despite not having any results since its creation undoubtedly presents the political apathy for these refugees. While UNRWA does now practice some protectionary measures, it still has not received an updated mandate, nor have there been steps taken to address the protection gap for those refugees outside UNRWA operations that have not received UNHCR protection. The problematic nature of Article 1D as well as the protection gaps within the mandates has been addressed by numerous scholars for innately excluding several Palestinian refugees, but the issue has never found itself being discussed within the international community. The treatment of Palestinian refugees in host countries has been attempted to be fixed, through programs such as ‘Dignity for All,’ these trials have all remained fruitless and without holding the host countries accountable, UNRWA has permitted this inferior treatment. Unlike many other branches of the UN, UNRWA also does not have a set budget through the United Nations, rather depending on the voluntary funds they receive. The UN created Resolution 2334 that states Israel was violating international law but did not enact any measures to enforce that they do. Without holding nations responsible for breaking the law, these international institutions are ignoring the

main guideline they were designed to uphold: to secure international human rights and peace by being an unbiased international monitor and police.

## **5. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE FRAMEWORK**

This next section breaks down possible solutions to the issue within the three subsections provided.

### **5.1 Adhering to International Law**

The only two durable solutions for these stateless Palestinian refugees are linked to them having a home, whether it be through their return to their homeland of Palestine, or by obtaining citizenship and rights in their host country. Agreement cannot occur between the two parties without the recognition that Palestinian surrender is a consequential decision that must be met with fair compensation. A comprehensive review of the human rights violations occurring is needed to lead to justice. This includes reviewing discriminatory laws that inherently disturb the path to peace.

The right to return for Palestinian refugees needs to be addressed in an updated framework (Al-Awda). The issue must be seen with a critical lens that de-politicizes the situation and views it as a matter independent of relationships with Israel. This will allow the issue to be placed back in the realm of international law where attempts to repatriate, protect and assist can be made (Mason). The United Nations must take action to enforce the resolution of the right to return. Israeli political parties had accepted the idea of refugee returning to a future Palestinian state in the 1990s, displaying that the main hindrance to repatriation can be overcome feasibly (Kagan). If the UNHCR truly cannot compete with Israeli resistance, it must turn to other solutions to ensure a home for these refugees, whether it means the creation of their own state or permanent resettlement into other countries. With the right of return being an individual right, there is also a possibility that citizenship can move responsibility from Israel and the

international community to just the individual (Gassner). Regardless, citizenship will provide the Palestinians with some form of protection and is undeniably better than their current status as they can hold the nation they identify with responsible for enforcing protection in the resettlement process. The observance of humanitarian law and international human rights must be advocated by international institutions as well as nation-states. The freedom of movement for refugees, as well as implementation of norms that allow refugees the basic rights to work and live with freedom in their host country are crucial to ending this prolonged crisis. The right to return is a reason given to curb the right to own property and citizenship, something that must be recognized as illegal. They must be allowed to work in the professional sphere and receive proper education that is affordable. Palestinians should be able to live outside of refugee camps to gain freedom of movement and ability to naturalize with the community (Shamieh).

## **5.2 Advancing International Agencies**

The UN Security Council should recognize the need for a solution, addressing the lack of political will due to current international alliances. The refugees must also be able to create a representative structure through the help of the UN, to address the issues facing them as well as providing them the ability to express their political rights (Rempel). By legitimizing Israel's occupancy after the 1967 war, the world ignores a core principle of international law (Farah). This does not mean that this recognition must be revoked, but rather that there are several measures necessary to address the impact this action had on Palestinian refugees.

The UNCCP must either be funded and employed, or another international agency must replace it to search for durable solutions and recognize the protection gap. The agency that replaces UNCCP must ensure it emphasizes paragraph 11 of Resolution 194 which recognizes the right of return for Palestinian refugees. UNHCR must advocate for the proper interpretation

of Article 1D, by maintaining constructive dialogue and addressing the protection gap for Palestinian refugees within the UNRWA mandate. It must also seek to increase its knowledge of Palestinians living outside UNRWA's area of operation and strive to improve the quality of protection and living standards for these refugees (Goddard). In practice, many Palestinian refugees outside the UNRWA's geographical range fall through the gap for receiving aid through UNHCR, as seen in those Palestinian refugees escaping Syria for Turkey, Egypt and Iraq. These Palestinian refugees who originally resettled in Syria should be looked at specifically to ensure proper assistance and protection is given to them as the Syrian civil war continues (Irfan). There should be a registration system of all refugees and displaced individuals. UNHCR should also expand its mandate to include all Palestinian refugees and overlook UNRWA's operations in the region (Erakat).

UNRWA and UNHCR must also increase dialogue amongst one another to highlight methods to cooperate for better protection of refugees. Regardless of which mandate Palestinian refugees fall under, they should have the right to better protection and that can only be done if these agencies begin communicating (Goddard). Together, they can work to lobby states to provide these refugees with more options and resources (Erakat). The United Nations should also take action to support these agencies in providing services. They can create a mechanism to protect all the refugees in host countries. They should recognize their responsibility in ensuring that the health, education and welfare condition of these refugees is acceptable, whether they reside in homes or in camps. By ensuring individual rights protection, these refugees are lifted to meeting the standard of conditions other refugees receive. By making sure that UNRWA can administer identification cards without resistance from host countries, travel and receiving assistance will also be eased (Kagan).

### 5.3 Change in the International Community

Nations must also step up to accept their own responsibility in protecting these refugees. International allies must be overlooked to provide all refugees with the basic human rights protected for them by the United Nations. As evident, the United States alliance with Israel has led it to cease support of UNRWA, curbing services to Palestinian refugees. Nations must recognize that the international system is bound by the de facto choice of acceptance, or lack thereof, of a responsibility by the receiving state (Bazirake). This must be changed into agreement that acceptance can be the only option, as these individuals are in situations where protection of another country is their only option. These refugees must be able to fight for protection of other countries due to the circumstances they live within their own country without having to pay more for their need for protection to be recognized.

Only 33 countries offer active resettlement, and fewer offer resettlement as a permanent solution for refugees. 10 developing countries host more than 56% of the world's refugees within settlements (Bazirake). This must be increased to more developing countries that can actually withstand the resettlements of these refugees. Host countries must also recognize their responsibility in protecting refugees in their territory and not viewing them as security concerns. Governments such as the Lebanese must abide with international law and not treat refugees as foreigners, focusing on a human security-based approach, looking to human rights as a framework.

This following quote from Arendt displays the continuance of all aspects of the stateless nature despite the centuries between the case of the Jews and the current case of the Palestinians.

[T]hat the abstract nakedness of being nothing but human was their greatest danger. Because of it they were regarded as savages and, afraid that they might end by being considered beasts, they insisted on their nationality, the last sign of their former citizenship, as their only remaining and recognized tie with humanity. (Arendt 300)

It goes to display the lens the international community has continued in regards to these stateless refugees.

Furthermore, just like the necessity that arose with the horror of the Holocaust for the creation of Israel, the stateless caused for Palestinians through the creation of Israel must be seen as a critical situation needing of similar action. As evident from Arendt's work, the only two solutions for refugees are repatriation or naturalization. With neither of those occurring in the case of Palestinian refugees, they are left without rights or protection from any government (Arendt).



## CONCLUSION

This thesis focuses on the inherent political nature of international institutions, despite their main goal being to address social issues such as UNRWA. These organizations are just puppets to the aid they receive, further displaying the influence of alliances in the protection of Palestinian refugees. These individuals live in between a prolonged conflict and their vulnerability as refugees, lost in this space where they cannot claim an identity in their host nation or of their homeland. Their ineligibility to seek protection from UNHCR, ability to resettle in Palestine, and access to proper living conditions puts them at a unique disadvantage. This wastes their lives, as they are stuck in a generational cycle of disparity and discrimination. As this research has displayed, Israel's recognition in the international realm has led to a decrease of protection for Palestinian refugees. It displays how the international community must be vigilant in their participation in the plight of Palestinian refugees. International institutions, such as the United Nations, must also monitor and enforce international refugee law to ensure the protection of human rights. There certainly are limitations to this, as it will always ultimately be up to influential nation-states, such as the United States, to set the precedent for other countries to follow suit.

There are many other questions regarding this situation that can be explored in future research. What further problems impact Palestinian refugees? What are additional ways that these problems can be addressed? How do international institutions enforce legislation without impeding state sovereignty? Have nations moved closer or further away from implementing international refugee law in various situations? How does the experience of Palestinian refugees compare to that of other areas partitioned by the League of Nations following World War 1?

These are different directions future work can develop to provide a better understanding of the depth and gravity of this issue and how it is likely to be replicated due to the socio-political nature of the international community.

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