Impact of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Human Security (2020-2024)

By

Ngene Innocent Aja
Department of Political Science,
Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Nigeria.
&
Alita Emmanuel Chinagorom
Department of Political Science,
Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Nigeria.

Abstract

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been the subject of extensive academic inquiry, yet much of this literature remains anchored in geopolitical, military, and diplomatic analyses, often sidelining the deeper human consequences of protracted violence. While considerable scholarship has explored peace processes and strategic alliances, there is a significant gap in understanding how prolonged hostilities have compromised the human security of civilians across the region. This study addresses that gap by pursuing three objectives: to assess the extent of civilian vulnerability especially among women, children, and the elderly; to evaluate how the conflict has impaired healthcare access and economic stability in affected zones; and to examine the role of international actors in shaping human security outcomes through policy interventions. Using qualitative data from credible sources such as Amnesty International, WHO, and UNOCHA, and framed within the Realist theory of international relations, the findings reveal an alarming surge in civilian casualties, near-total collapse of Gaza's healthcare system, and the limited efficacy of global interventions due to entrenched geopolitical interests. Although international actors have engaged through aid and diplomacy, their efforts are frequently undermined by selective engagement and power asymmetries. The study recommends three strategic measures: enhanced civilian protection protocols under international law, coordinated global funding to restore essential services particularly healthcare and sanitation and a recalibration of international diplomatic frameworks to prioritize neutrality, human rights, and long-term peacebuilding. Ultimately, the research argues that placing human

security at the center of global policy is not only morally imperative but essential for sustainable conflict resolution in the region.

Keywords: Human Security, Conflict, Israeli-Palestinian, Policy Intervention, International Actors

1. Introduction

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is not merely a protracted territorial dispute; it is a structural condition of chronic human insecurity in which cycles of violence, occupation, and political deadlock systematically erode civilian safety, economic viability, and social cohesion. Despite extensive diplomatic engagement and voluminous scholarship, the conflict's most enduring feature is the normalization of insecurity in everyday life for both Palestinians and Israelis. From the post-Ottoman reordering of the region and the 1917 Balfour Declaration through the 1948 war and its mass displacement of Palestinians (Rusanti, Isman, Nashrullah, Mansyur, & Elzaanin, 2024; Nijim, 2024), the conflict has evolved into a multilayered regime of territorial fragmentation, contested sovereignty, and asymmetrical power. Subsequent wars and the occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza entrenched structural vulnerabilities that diplomatic initiatives including the Oslo Accords and the Camp David Summit failed to resolve (Nijim, 2024). Rather than moving toward durable settlement, the conflict has reproduced conditions in which civilians bear the cumulative burden of geopolitical stalemate. It is this persistent gap between high-level political processes and lived human consequences that motivates the present study. By foregrounding human security as an analytical lens, this article shifts attention from state-centric narratives of strategy and negotiation to the protection, well-being, and dignity of individuals affected by the conflict.

The urgency of such a reframing became particularly evident between 2020 and 2024, a period marked by geopolitical realignment, public health crisis, and renewed armed confrontation. The Abraham Accords recalibrated regional diplomacy by normalizing relations between Israel and several Arab states, while sidestepping substantive progress on Palestinian statehood (Hasan & Buheji, 2024). Simultaneously, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed and intensified structural inequalities, particularly in Gaza, where healthcare fragility, blockade-

induced constraints, and economic stagnation intersected to deepen vulnerability (Hasan & Buheji, 2024). Escalations in 2021, triggered by tensions in East Jerusalem and culminating in an 11-day confrontation between Israel and Hamas, resulted in significant civilian casualties, displacement, and infrastructure destruction (Benn, 2024). In the West Bank, rising settler-related violence and movement restrictions further undermined physical and economic security (Robinson, 2024). These developments underscore that insecurity in this context is not episodic but systemic, spanning physical safety, access to healthcare, livelihood stability, and community resilience.

Yet, much of the existing literature continues to privilege geopolitical strategy, legal doctrine, or diplomatic maneuvering over the cumulative human consequences of protracted conflict. While scholars have examined interventionist aid dynamics (Azis & Kusumadewi, 2024), the limitations of International Humanitarian Law in asymmetric warfare (Nabiebu et al., 2024), sovereignty and jurisdictional contestation (Haryani & Setiyono, 2024), the operational constraints of the International Committee of the Red Cross (Suraningsih et al., 2024), and the European Union's constrained mediation capacity (Akgül-Açıkmeşe & Özel, 2024), less attention has been devoted to integrating these strands within a coherent human security framework. This lacuna is analytically consequential: without centering the lived realities of civilians, assessments of the conflict risk overstating diplomatic shifts while understating entrenched vulnerabilities.

This study addresses that gap by systematically examining how the Israeli–Palestinian conflict affected multiple dimensions of human security personal safety, economic stability, access to healthcare, and community cohesion during the 2020–2024 period. The study raised the following questions: To what extent has the conflict reshaped civilian safety in both Israel and the Palestinian territories? How has it influenced access to healthcare and socio-economic conditions in conflict-affected areas? And how have international actors and policy interventions mitigated or exacerbated these human security outcomes? By situating contemporary developments within the longer structural dynamics of the conflict, the article advances a people-centered analysis that moves beyond narrative recounting toward a rigorous assessment of how protracted geopolitical contestation translates into everyday insecurity.

2. Literature Review

Impact of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict on Civilian Safety

Recent scholarship increasingly interrogates the gap between normative legal frameworks and the lived realities of civilians in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Putra, Persadha, and Suhardi (2024), in *Transforming Conflict: Analyzing the Impact of UN Security Council Resolution 2334 on Human Security in Israel–Palestine*, assess whether Resolution 2334 advances human security by curbing settlement expansion and reinforcing international humanitarian law. Using a qualitative literature-based approach grounded in the human security framework, they find that although the resolution normatively aligns with civilian protection principles, weak enforcement and persistent non-compliance significantly undermine its practical impact. Their study underscores the structural disconnect between international legal prescriptions and conditions on the ground.

Shifting from institutional frameworks to civilian perceptions, Loewenthal, Miaari, and Abrahams (2023), in *How Civilian Attitudes Respond to the State's Violence: Lessons from the Israel–Gaza Conflict*, evaluate whether Israeli coercive policies particularly blockade and military force reduce Palestinian support for militant groups. Employing a difference-in-differences design that integrates public opinion, labor, and fatality data across Gaza and the West Bank, they find that exposure to violence produces only short-term attitudinal shifts. Neither fatalities nor blockade policies generate sustained deterrent effects. The findings challenge conventional deterrence assumptions in asymmetric conflicts, though the limited temporal scope constrains long-term inference.

Expanding the analysis to punitive state practices, Noah (2023), in *Understanding Conflict Penality: Dominant Themes and the Case of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict*, conceptualizes "conflict penality" to describe how states deploy incarceration and punishment against perceived enemies during conflict. Through qualitative analysis rooted in punishment theory, the study argues that penal power functions not only as a security instrument but also as a mechanism for delegitimizing adversaries. While such measures may serve short-term security objectives, they risk eroding the moral legitimacy of the state. Although based on a single case, the study broadens punishment theory by embedding it within conflict dynamics.

Legal critiques of civilian protection norms further illuminate the fragility of safeguards in practice. Pons Rafols (2024), in *The War in Gaza and the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict: A Turning Point in the Midst of an Endless Cycle of Violence*, examines recent hostilities through the lens of international law, focusing on self-defense claims, war crimes, and institutional responses by the United Nations. He concludes that although legal standards governing proportionality and civilian protection are well established, enforcement remains fragmented and politically constrained. Similarly, Liu (2024), in *Civilians at War: Focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Scrutinizing the Doctrine of Non-Combatant Immunity*, questions the contemporary efficacy of non-combatant immunity within just war theory. Through doctrinal legal analysis, Liu argues that the principle, while normatively robust, has proven operationally weak in preventing civilian harm, particularly where self-defense claims dominate justificatory discourse.

These studies reveal a consistent pattern: international legal norms, punitive strategies, and coercive security policies have limited capacity to deliver sustained civilian protection. While each contributes valuable theoretical or empirical insights, gaps remain in integrating these strands within a comprehensive human security framework that captures both structural and immediate threats to civilian safety. This lacuna reinforces the need for a systematic assessment of how conflict dynamics between 2020 and 2024 have shaped multidimensional human security outcomes.

Economic Needs and Healthcare in Conflict Zones

A growing body of literature demonstrates that protracted conflict in Israel–Palestine generates deep structural distortions in economic life and healthcare provision. Bhowmick (2024), in *Impact of Israel–Palestine Conflict on the Economy and Businesses of the Region*, situates the conflict within conflict economics theory, arguing that persistent violence, mobility restrictions, and trade blockades suppress productivity and investment. While both economies incur costs particularly through military expenditure and regional instability the Palestinian economy is shown to suffer disproportionately due to constrained access to markets and resources. Although largely qualitative, the study underscores how conflict entrenches economic asymmetries and long-term underdevelopment.

Focusing on the intersection of war and public health, Martadinata, Gibran, Kaunang, Hadianto, and Risman (2024), in *Palestine and Israel War Conflict During COVID-19*, contend that the pandemic amplified pre-existing humanitarian vulnerabilities. Drawing on international humanitarian law, the authors argue that restrictions on movement and essential supplies during COVID-19 intensified sanitation, health, and socio-economic crises in the occupied territories. Though reliant on secondary sources, the study highlights the limitations of legal safeguards during compounded emergencies.

Beyond immediate physical destruction, recent research emphasizes the systemic collapse of healthcare infrastructure in conflict settings. While not focused on Israel–Palestine, Badri and Dawood's (2024) analysis of attacks on healthcare facilities in Sudan provides a comparative lens, demonstrating how violence against medical institutions precipitates large-scale service breakdowns and workforce depletion. This broader pattern resonates with emerging findings from Gaza. Shorrab et al. (2024), examining the 2023 war in Gaza, adopt a systems-thinking approach to document cascading health risks, including infrastructure failure, infectious disease spread, and deteriorating mental health. Their proposed "3S Framework" security and prevention, supply management, and system support offers a structured but as yet empirically untested model for crisis mitigation.

Mental health consequences further reveal the socio-economic depth of insecurity. Ronzani et al. (2024), using nationally representative survey data from 5,877 respondents in the West Bank and Gaza, estimate that 58 percent of Palestinian adults exhibit depressive symptoms, with prevalence rising to 71 percent in Gaza. Exposure to violence is strongly correlated with severe depression, generating socio-economic losses equivalent to nearly 9 percent of Palestine's GDP in 2022. Despite limitations associated with self-reported data, the study quantifies the economic burden of psychological trauma in conflict settings.

These studies demonstrate that economic deprivation, healthcare fragility, and mental health deterioration are not peripheral consequences but central features of protracted conflict. However, existing research often treats these dimensions in isolation. There remains a need for an integrated human security analysis that

systematically connects economic instability, healthcare access, and psychosocial well-being within the broader dynamics of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict during the 2020–2024 period.

Role of International Actors in Policy Interventions and Human Security

Scholarly attention to international actors underscores how external interventions shape, and often constrain, human security outcomes in Israel–Palestine. Falki and Asrar (2024), in *Analysis of the Contemporary Politics of Palestine–Israel Conflict and Role of Major Powers*, adopt a realist geopolitical lens to examine the roles of the United States, Russia, China, and Iran. They argue that major powers frequently prioritize strategic interests over humanitarian considerations, thereby perpetuating rather than resolving insecurity. While illuminating global power dynamics and diaspora advocacy, the study stops short of systematically linking these interventions to measurable human security indicators.

Regional and multilateral actors face similar structural limitations. Akgül-Açıkmeşe and Özel (2024), in *EU Policy Towards the Israel–Palestine Conflict: The Limitations of Mitigation Strategies*, demonstrate that the European Union's reliance on delegation (CSDP missions), multilateralism (the Quartet), and selective engagement (trade and aid) has yielded limited impact due to internal divisions, U.S.–Israel alignment, and regional fragmentation. Likewise, Ali, Alam, and Shah (2025), assessing the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), find that rhetorical support for Palestinian statehood has not translated into effective political leverage, largely because of intra-member divisions and normalization trends following the Abraham Accords.

Legal and humanitarian institutions encounter parallel constraints. Haryani and Setiyono (2024) identify jurisdictional and sovereignty-related barriers that weaken the enforcement of international humanitarian law (IHL) protections for victims. Suraningsih et al. (2024) highlight the operational importance of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Gaza but note the political obstacles limiting its effectiveness. Similarly, Azis and Kusumadewi (2024) conceptualize U.S. military assistance to Israel as "interventionist aid," arguing that aid has become intertwined with strategic militarization rather than purely humanitarian objectives. Nabiebu et al. (2024) further contend that politicization

within the UN Security Council and selective application of IHL principles undermine civilian protection and accountability.

This literature reveals a persistent disjunction between diplomatic engagement, legal frameworks, and tangible improvements in human security. While international actors remain central to policy interventions, their strategies are often constrained by geopolitical competition, institutional fragmentation, and enforcement deficits. What remains underexplored is how these external dynamics concretely shape civilian safety, economic stability, and healthcare access during acute escalation periods an analytical gap this study seeks to address through a focused human security lens.

Scholarship on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict underscores a persistent tension between humanitarian principles and geopolitical interests. Studies show that foreign aid, particularly U.S. support to Israel, often functions as a tool of strategic intervention rather than genuine relief (Azis & Kusumadewi, 2024), while adherence to International Humanitarian Law is frequently undermined by power asymmetries and jurisdictional constraints (Nabiebu et al., 2024; Haryani & Setiyono, 2024). Neutral actors like the ICRC face operational limits in volatile settings (Suraningsih et al., 2024), and institutional efforts such as the EU's two-state advocacy are constrained by regional fragmentation and multipolar competition (Akgül-Açıkmeşe & Özel, 2024). Together, these findings reveal enduring gaps in legal, humanitarian, and policy frameworks, highlighting the need for integrated approaches that prioritize civilian protection and human security.

3. Theoretical Framework

In light of the discussions presented in this study, the Realist Theory of International Relations emerges as the most appropriate framework for understanding the complex dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its broader implications. Realism, rooted in the ideas of thinkers such as Hans Morgenthau (1948) and Kenneth Waltz (1979), posits that states are the primary actors in international politics, driven by the pursuit of power and self-interest in an anarchic global system where no central authority exists to regulate state behavior (Schmidt, & Wight, 2023). This theory is particularly relevant to the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where power dynamics, state sovereignty, and security concerns dominate the actions of the primary actors involved.

Applying the Realist Theory to this study, Israel's actions, including its military strategies, targeted killings, and territorial occupations, can be understood as efforts to secure its national interest and survival amidst a hostile regional environment. Similarly, Palestine's responses, supported by non-state actors, can be viewed as attempts to reclaim sovereignty and resist external domination. The involvement of external powers, such as the United States' aid to Israel, further exemplifies the realist notion of states seeking to expand influence and maintain power within a highly competitive international system. Azis and Kusumadewi (2024) discuss the 'aidization of weapons' in U.S.-Israel relations, which fits within the Realist framework, showcasing how states leverage aid as a tool to assert dominance and ensure political stability aligned with their strategic interests.

Realism also sheds light on the failure of international institutions, such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), to enforce humanitarian norms effectively in this conflict. As noted by Nabiebu et al. (2024), the veto power wielded by permanent members reflects the prioritization of national interests over collective security and justice, a core tenet of realist thought. Moreover, the EU's inability to mitigate the conflict, as analyzed by Akgül-Açıkmeşe and Özel (2024), underscores the realist critique of multilateralism, suggesting that states, driven by internal rifts and diverging national interests, are reluctant to engage in unified action unless it aligns with their core objectives.

The Realist Theory therefore, provides the most fitting theoretical lens for this study, as it encapsulates the inherent power struggles, the pursuit of self-interest, and the strategic use of both force and diplomacy that define the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It helps explain why international legal frameworks and humanitarian interventions have often failed to resolve the conflict, as powerful states continue to act based on realpolitik considerations rather than moral or legal imperatives. By applying this theory, the study can further elucidate the limitations of existing conflict resolution strategies and propose more pragmatic approaches grounded in the realities of international power politics.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, relying exclusively on secondary data to explore the complex socio-political, legal, and humanitarian dimensions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The research draws on peer-reviewed academic literature, official reports from international organizations (e.g., UN, ICRC, Human Rights Watch), government documents, legal instruments including the Geneva Conventions and UN Security Council resolutions, as well as credible media and policy analyses. The geographical focus encompasses the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Israel's northern borders with Lebanon and Syria, with particular attention to human security determinants such as movement restrictions, access to basic services, and vulnerabilities among women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Data were collected through systematic desk research, including literature reviews and consultation of institutional repositories, legal documents, and international organization archives. Analysis combined content and thematic approaches to identify recurring patterns related to interventionist aid, sovereignty, and international actor engagement. Validity was ensured by using credible, peer-reviewed, and official sources, while reliability was reinforced through triangulation, transparency in data selection, and replicable analytical procedures, ensuring consistent and well-supported conclusions.

5. Results

The Impact of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Civilian Safety

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, enduring for decades, has escalated into one of the most protracted and devastating confrontations in modern history. The recent intensification, particularly since October 7, 2023, has profoundly affected civilian safety in both Israel and Palestine, with the Gaza Strip bearing the brunt of the hostilities. The Gaza Strip has witnessed unprecedented levels of violence and destruction. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), between October 7, 2023, and July 22, 2024, at least 39,006 Palestinians were killed, and 89,818 were injured in Gaza (OCHA, 2024). The Ministry of Health in Gaza reports that women and children constitute approximately 70% of the casualties, highlighting the disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations (Reuters, 2024).OCHA (2024) the extensive military operations have led to the destruction of over 60% of Gaza's infrastructure, including homes, schools, and hospitals (Amnesty International, 2024). This

destruction has rendered large swaths of the territory uninhabitable, displacing over 1.7 million people, many of whom are now living in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions (OCHA, 2024).

The table below shows the civilian casualties in Israel and Palestine and how It has affected the civilian activities.

Table 1: Civilian Impact of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (Oct 7, 2023 – July 22, 2024)

Impact Category	Gaza (Palestine)	Israel
Civilian Deaths	39,006 (as of July 22, 2024)	1,200 (initial Hamas attacks, Oct 2023)
Civilian Injuries	89,818	Over 5,000 (ongoing conflict)
Women and Children Casualties	~70% of total deaths (~27,300)	Not officially disaggregated
Displacement	Over 1.7 million internally displaced	Thousands temporarily displaced by rockets
Schools Destroyed/Damaged	Over 60% affected	Minimal damage reported
Students Out of School	625,000	Few regional school closures
Healthcare System Status	Near-collapse; 70% of hospitals inoperable	Stable but strained during emergencies
Access to Vaccination	Polio program halted (600,000+ children)	No major disruption reported
Malnutrition Among Children	60,000+ severely affected	No widespread malnutrition reported
Mental Health Impacts	Severe trauma, especially children	Documented stress and anxiety increases

Source: OCHA (2024); Amnesty International (2024); Reuters (2024, 2025)
Humanitarian Crisis

The conflict has precipitated a severe humanitarian crisis. The blockade imposed by Israel has restricted the flow of essential supplies, including food, water, and medical aid, exacerbating the suffering of the civilian population. The United Nations reports that 625,000 students have no access to education, and more than 5,000 students and 240 teachers have been killed (OCHA, 2024). Additionally, over 60% of schools have sustained damage, further disrupting the education system. The blockade imposed by Israel, combined with internal political gridlock, has worsened the humanitarian crisis. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported in April 2024 that essential medical supplies, including pain relief, antibiotics, and dialysis kits, were at less than 15% stock levels in most Gaza hospitals (UNOCHA, 2024). Fuel shortages have forced medical staff to choose between running life support machines or lighting emergency wards at night (Médecins Sans Frontières [MSF], 2024).

Table 2: Breakdown of Civilian Casualties in Gaza by Age and Gender (Oct 2023 – Apr 2025)

Category	Estimated Number	% of Total Fatalities
Total Civilian Deaths	51,000+	100%
Children (under 18)	13,300+	26%
Women	22,500+	44%
Elderly (65+)	4,000+	8%
Men (non-combatants)	11,200+	22%

Source: Gaza Ministry of Health (cited in UN OCHA, 2024); Amnesty International (2024)

Table 2, gives a demographic snapshot of who is most affected in Gaza, which helps highlight the disproportionate toll on non-combatants especially children and women. The conduct of hostilities by both parties has raised serious concerns regarding compliance with international humanitarian law. Amnesty International has documented instances of unlawful attacks by Israeli forces, resulting in mass civilian casualties and destruction of civilian infrastructure (Amnesty International, 2024). The organization has called for independent

investigations into these incidents to ensure accountability and justice for the victims.

Table 3: Attacks on Civilian Infrastructure in Gaza (Oct 2023 – Apr 2025)

Type of Infrastructure	Number of Facilities Attacked or Destroyed	Operational Status
Schools	379 partially or fully destroyed	Over 60% out of service
Hospitals	36 hospitals damaged or destroyed	70% non-functional
Water/Sanitation Plants	56 damaged	Leading to waterborne disease outbreaks
UNRWA Shelters	148 shelters targeted or severely impacted	Displacement compounded
Power Infrastructure	12 major installations hit	22-hour average daily blackout (Gaza Strip)

Source: UN OCHA (2024); Save the Children (2024); Al Mezan Center for Human Rights (2025)

Table 3 above visually supports the narrative around the systemic targeting or collateral damage to civilian infrastructure. It reveals the interconnectedness between safety and basic human needs education, healthcare, sanitation all of which underpin human security. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has had a devastating impact on civilian safety in both Israel and Palestine. The scale of casualties, destruction of infrastructure, and the ensuing humanitarian crisis underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive and lasting resolution to the conflict. Ensuring the protection of civilians and adherence to international humanitarian law must be paramount in any efforts towards peace.

Impact of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict on Access to Healthcare in Conflict-Affected Areas

The enduring Israeli-Palestinian conflict has had a devastating impact on healthcare delivery in both Israel and the Palestinian territories, with the Gaza Strip bearing the brunt of the destruction. The war, which intensified in October 2023, has turned hospitals into battlefields, hindered humanitarian access, and

plunged medical services into near-total collapse (World Health Organization [WHO], 2024a). The most affected are those already vulnerable children, pregnant women, the elderly, and individuals with chronic health conditions who are now enduring critical delays or total loss of care.

Table 4: Impact of the Conflict on Healthcare Indicators in Gaza (Oct 2023 – Apr 2024)

Indicator	Pre-Conflict (2022)	Current (Apr 2024)	Source
Functional hospitals	32 out of 36	11 (partial)	WHO (2024a)
Healthcare workers killed	0	885	WHO (2024b)
Ambulances destroyed	0	130	WHO (2024b)
Dialysis centers functional	7	1	Associated Press (2024)
Vaccination coverage (under 5s)	95%	20%	Save the Children (2024); UNICEF
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100k births)	85	470 (estimated)	UNFPA (2024)
Average daily patients untreated	-	5,000+	MSF (2024); UNOCHA (2024)

Sources: WHO, 2024a; WHO, 2024b; Save the Children, 2024; UNFPA, 2024; MSF, 2024; UNOCHA, 2024).

From 4 table above, a clear trend is the dramatic decline in the functionality of healthcare facilities, with the number of operational hospitals dropping from 32 to 11, and dialysis centers functioning at a critically low level. The destruction of ambulances and the loss of healthcare workers have exacerbated the situation, contributing to the rising number of untreated patients. The maternal mortality ratio has also spiked, reflecting the devastating impact on women's health, while vaccination coverage for children under five has plummeted. This data underscores the catastrophic effect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on public health, leading to widespread humanitarian suffering and a collapse of basic health services. In Gaza, the health sector is operating under siege. As of March 2024, only 11 out of 36 hospitals were partially functional, with most operating at

less than 30% capacity due to physical destruction, staff shortages, or power outages (WHO, 2024a). Al-Shifa Hospital, once Gaza's largest medical facility, was rendered inoperable following a sustained military siege that resulted in infrastructure collapse, forced evacuations, and the arrest or death of staff (International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], 2024). The ramifications of this extend beyond infrastructure thousands are now denied life-saving care for trauma, dialysis, cancer, and obstetric complications.

The healthcare system in Gaza is on the verge of collapse. Hospitals are overwhelmed, with shortages of medical supplies and personnel. The blockade has also led to the suspension of critical vaccination campaigns, such as the polio vaccination program intended to reach over 600,000 children (Reuters, 2025). Malnutrition is rampant, with 60,000 children already showing signs of severe malnutrition.

The psychological toll of the conflict on civilians, particularly children, is profound. Continuous exposure to violence, loss of loved ones, and displacement have led to widespread trauma and mental health issues. The destruction of community structures and support systems has further exacerbated the psychological distress experienced by the population. In Israel, the conflict has also resulted in significant civilian casualties. The initial attacks by Hamas on October 7, 2023, led to the deaths of approximately 1,200 people and the taking of hostages, prompting a substantial military response from Israel (Reuters, 2025).
The ongoing hostilities have continued to pose threats to civilian safety as shown in table 2 below, with rocket attacks and other forms of violence affecting daily life.

Moreover, the human cost is staggering. The WHO (2024b) recorded over 460 attacks on healthcare infrastructure in Gaza between October 2023 and March 2024. As of April 2024, over 885 healthcare workers had been killed, and 130 ambulances were either damaged or destroyed (WHO, 2024b). The result is a healthcare system not just strained but fractured, with thousands dying from conditions that would otherwise be treatable. Children have been particularly affected. According to Save the Children (2024), over 600,000 children under the age of five have missed routine vaccinations since October 2023, including against

polio and measles, due to the collapse of the primary health system. In a coordinated campaign suspended in March 2024, UNICEF reported that cold-chain disruptions led to the spoilage of thousands of doses (UNICEF, 2024).

The destruction of dialysis centers has become a symbol of the broader collapse. As noted by the Associated Press (2024), six out of seven dialysis units were bombed or became non-functional, leading to the deaths of at least 412 patients between December 2023 and April 2024. These are not just statistics but daily human tragedies unfolding in silence. Even access to maternal care is now a crisis. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza are at risk, with 183,000 expected births this year taking place in unsafe and unsanitary conditions (UNFPA, 2024). The inability to access cesarean sections or skilled birth attendants has led to a dramatic rise in maternal and neonatal deaths. While the situation in Israel is less catastrophic in terms of infrastructure, the conflict has still significantly impacted healthcare services. Major hospitals in southern Israel have reported severe stress on trauma and emergency departments due to rocket fire and casualties (Ben-Ami, 2024). In addition, psychological health services are overwhelmed with new cases of anxiety and PTSD among civilians and soldiers, especially in the towns bordering Gaza (Levi, 2024). Beyond the immediate casualties, the conflict is creating long-term public health risks. Displacement, overcrowding in shelters, and poor sanitation have heightened risks of cholera, hepatitis, and respiratory infections particularly in refugee camps in Rafah and Khan Younis (Palestinian Ministry of Health, 2024).

The World Bank (2024) has projected that the cost of rebuilding Gaza's healthcare infrastructure may exceed $2 billion if military operations persist through 2025. However, even with financial input, the psychological trauma, loss of experienced medical personnel, and systemic destruction have left a scar that international aid alone cannot mend. The role of international humanitarian actors has thus become critical. While the WHO, UNRWA, and MSF have launched emergency interventions, their access remains constrained by Israeli-imposed restrictions (Amnesty International, 2024). Repeated calls for safe humanitarian corridors have not been meaningfully upheld, raising urgent questions about Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law (Falki & Asrar, 2024).

The Role of International Actors in Policy Interventions and Their Influence on Human Security in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has long been a focal point of international diplomacy, with various actors attempting to mediate, intervene, or influence outcomes. However, the effectiveness of these interventions, particularly concerning human security, remains a subject of intense scrutiny. This section examines the roles played by key international actors namely, the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, and other global entities in shaping the trajectory of the conflict and their impact on the human security of affected populations.

The table below shows the major actors in the conflict and their various roles:

Table 5: Key International Actors and Their Roles in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Actor	Role/Intervention	Impact on Human Security
United Nations	Advocacy for ceasefires, humanitarian aid through UNRWA	Efforts hampered by geopolitical divisions; limited success in protecting civilians
United States	Military aid to Israel, vetoing UN resolutions	Perceived bias undermines credibility; support for Israel complicates peace efforts
European Union	Diplomatic statements, humanitarian assistance	Inconsistent actions; limited enforcement of international law
Pope Francis	Moral advocacy, condemnation of violence	Raised global awareness; provided solace to affected communities
The Elders	Calls for sustainable peace and equal rights	Advocacy for long-term solutions; influence on public discourse

Source: Amnesty International. (2024, December).

United Nations: Aspirations vs. Realities

The United Nations has historically positioned itself as a neutral arbiter in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, advocating for peace and the protection of human rights. However, its effectiveness has been hampered by internal divisions and

external pressures. In December 2023, the U.S. vetoed a Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups, highlighting the geopolitical complexities that often stymie UN initiatives (Human Rights Watch, 2024). The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been instrumental in providing essential services to Palestinian refugees. Yet, its operations have faced significant challenges. In early 2025, Israel banned UNRWA from operating within its territory, citing alleged involvement of some staff in Hamas' October 2023 attack on Israel. This move led to the closure of six UNRWA schools in East Jerusalem, further exacerbating the humanitarian crisis (AP News, 2025).

European Union and Other International Actors

The European Union has attempted to balance its support for Israel's right to security with its commitment to human rights and international law. However, its actions have often been perceived as inconsistent. While the EU has condemned Hamas' attacks, it has also criticized Israel's disproportionate military responses. Despite these statements, tangible actions to hold either party accountable have been limited, leading to questions about the EU's effectiveness in influencing positive change (Chatham House, 2024). Beyond these major players, other international actors have sought to influence the conflict's trajectory. Pope Francis, for instance, consistently condemned the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, labeling Israel’s actions as terrorism and advocating for Palestinian statehood (The Guardian, 2025).. His moral leadership provided solace to many in Gaza, especially the Christian minority, and highlighted the role religious leaders can play in advocating for human security (The Guardian, 2025). Similarly, organizations like The Elders have called for a new approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, emphasizing the need for a just and sustainable peace that ensures sovereignty, self-determination, and equal rights for both peoples (The Elders, 2024). The interventions or lack thereof by international actors have had profound implications for human security in the region. The failure to achieve a lasting ceasefire has resulted in continued violence, displacement, and humanitarian crises. As of October 2024, approximately 1.9 million people were displaced in Gaza, representing a staggering 86% of its population (Human Rights Watch, 2024). The blockade imposed by Israel, with tacit support from some

international actors, has led to severe shortages of food, medicine, and essential services, exacerbating the suffering of civilians (Reuters, 2025).

From the analysis, the following are the major findings

i. The conflict has caused severe civilian casualties, with over 4,000 deaths in 2023 alone. Airstrikes and rocket attacks have disproportionately affected non-combatants, highlighting the ongoing threat to civilian safety.
ii. Healthcare services in Gaza have collapsed, with functional hospitals reduced from 32 to 11. The destruction of medical facilities and the killing of healthcare workers have led to a healthcare crisis, leaving thousands without necessary treatment
iii. International interventions, particularly by the U.S. and Russia, have failed to resolve the conflict, with geopolitical interests hindering effective action. The selective engagement of major powers has perpetuated the conflict, exacerbating the human security crisis.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to have a profound and multifaceted impact on human security, with civilian safety, healthcare, and the effectiveness of international interventions all severely compromised. The findings from this study underscore the devastating consequences of the ongoing violence, particularly in Gaza, where the safety of civilians has been undermined by the constant threat of military operations, airstrikes, and rocket attacks. The healthcare infrastructure, once a vital pillar of civilian support, has been decimated, with widespread shortages in medical supplies and staff, exacerbating the already dire humanitarian conditions. Furthermore, international policy interventions, though well-intentioned, have failed to address the root causes of the conflict, often impeded by competing geopolitical interests and a lack of coordinated effort among global actors. Drawing from the realist theory of international relations, it is evident that the actions of powerful states and their pursuit of national interests have shaped the course of the conflict, preventing meaningful resolution and leaving human security in jeopardy. Despite the various international efforts, peace remains elusive, and the Palestinian people continue to bear the brunt of a geopolitical struggle that seems unlikely to be resolved in the near future. Therefore, it is crucial that future policy interventions

focus not only on immediate humanitarian aid but also on addressing the underlying political, territorial, and security issues, promoting a more sustainable and balanced approach to peacebuilding. Only through a holistic and collaborative effort can there be hope for a resolution that protects human security and lays the foundation for long-term peace.

7. Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict's impact on human security, the following recommendations are crucial for addressing the identified challenges:

i. International bodies must enforce international humanitarian law and ensure the implementation of protective measures such as deploying neutral peacekeeping forces, establishing safe zones, and providing unhindered access to shelters and medical services for vulnerable populations including women, children, and the elderly.

ii. Humanitarian agencies should prioritize rebuilding healthcare infrastructure, restoring essential medical services such as immunization, and delivering economic relief to affected civilian populations in both Israel and Palestine to mitigate the broader impact on human security.

iii. International actors must adopt a balanced and coordinated diplomatic strategy that addresses Israel's security needs while affirming Palestinian sovereignty, with policy interventions focused on inclusive peace negotiations, accountability, and the long-term promotion of human security in the region. These recommendations aim to mitigate the ongoing human security crisis and pave the way for a more stable and peaceful future for both Israel and Palestine.

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