

Frequently Asked Questions about the Israel-Hamas War

with footnotes

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(C) Israeli Defense Forces



Frequently Asked Questions for High School Educators

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Who is Hamas?

Hamas (means: Islamic Resistance Movement) is a Palestinian radical Sunni Islamist movement established in the Gaza Strip in 1987. It is an [offshoot of the “Muslim Brotherhood,”](#) an Egyptian Islamic movement (est. 1928) that created *Islamism* (in a departure from traditional Islam), a totalitarian ideology to resist the pluralistic West. [The Brotherhood’s motto is](#), “God is our objective. The Prophet is our political leader. The Quran is our constitution. Jihad is our method. Martyrdom is our aspiration.”¹

Hamas has three primary goals as set out in its founding charter of 1988:

- The liberation of all of historic Palestine and the vanquishing of its Jewish residents;
- The creation of an Islamic theocracy in liberated Palestine; and
- Aiding and abetting further Islamization of perceived Islamic lands around the world.

Based on both its formal declarations and its actions on October 7th, [Hamas has genocidal aims in respect to Israel and to its Jewish citizens](#). For example, article 2 of the Hamas Charter says, “Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it.” An example of Hamas’s declared antisemitism also appears in this foundational document: “The Day of Judgement will not come about, ... until Muslims fight the Jews (killing the Jews), when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say TO Muslims, O Abdulla, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.”²

In the Hamas Charter of 1988, the issue of peace is also addressed: “There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors.”³

Initially, Hamas’s activity in the Gaza Strip focused on charity and educational endeavors, but as the mainstream Palestinian movement began to move towards a peace process, Hamas activated “suicide bombers” who targeted the Israeli civilian population. They officially opposed and condemned the Oslo peace talks of the 1990s between Israeli and Palestinian representatives that attempted to find a peaceful solution to the

¹ Husain, E. (2023, November 9). *The theology of Hamas*. WSJ Opinion. Retrieved December 5, 2023, from https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-theology-of-hamas-c18e78fo?mod=opinion_major_pos400

² Hamas. (2008). *Hamas Covenant 1988*. The Avalon Project. Retrieved October 30, 2023, from https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp

³ Ibid.

conflict between the two nations. [The U.S. declared Hamas a terror organization in 1997.](#)⁴

In 2005, Israel withdrew completely from the Gaza Strip and handed the keys over to the Palestinian Authority. For the first time ever, the Palestinians were left to rule themselves and Israel extended a hand in peace. Three days after the Israeli disengagement from Gaza, Hamas shot rockets at Israeli civilian communities located within the internationally recognized borders of Israel. The following year, the political arm of Hamas was permitted to be listed on election ballots, [the last elections held in the Gaza Strip](#). They defeated the ruling Fatah Party, which had been negotiating with Israel, receiving 44% of the vote.⁵ Palestinian and foreign analysts at the time claimed that this was really a vote of no-confidence in the corrupt Palestinian Authority (headed by Fatah), more than a vote for Islamism. However, the Palestinian Authority did not cede control to Hamas, so Hamas staged a violent coup in 2007, driving the Palestinian Authority out of power by force. In response, both Israel and Egypt (both bordering on the Gaza Strip) [laid down a blockade](#) in an attempt to prevent Hamas from amassing offensive weaponry.⁶

How has life been for Palestinians living under Hamas's rule in the Gaza Strip?

[Human rights abuses abound.](#)⁷ Materials that could have been used to build schools, hospitals, and housing were utilized to [construct the underground attack tunnels](#).⁸ Unemployment is one of the highest in the world. [Polls](#) taken right before the attacks of October 7th indicated that most Gazans preferred the ceasefire between Hamas and Israel to a full-blown conflict.⁹

⁴ Sayki, I. (2023, November 7). *Timeline: How the Israeli-Palestinian peace process fell apart in the three decades after the 1993 Oslo Accord*. PBS Frontline. Retrieved December 5, 2023, from <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/timeline-israeli-palestinian-peace-process-1993-oslo-accord/>

⁵ Robinson, K. (2023, October 31). *Backgrounder: What Is Hamas?* Retrieved December 12, 2023, from <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hamas>

⁶ The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (Ed.). (n.d.). *The Israel-Hamas War 2023: Frequently asked questions*. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Retrieved December 12, 2023, from <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/israel-hamas-war-2023-frequently-asked-questions#what-is-the-u-s-designated-foreign-terrorist-organization-hamas-and-what-does-it-believe>

⁷ Fattal, I. (2023, October 9). *Hamas's attack confounds Middle East experts*. Retrieved December 12, 2023, from <https://www.theatlantic.com/newsletters/archive/2023/10/what-is-hamas/675594/>

⁸ The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (Ed.). (n.d.).

⁹ Cleveland, C., & Pollock, D. (2023, October 10). *Polls show majority of Gazans were against breaking ceasefire*. Retrieved December 12, 2023, from

Between 2005 and 2021, Israel and Hamas fought several serious skirmishes: in 2008/9, 2012, 2014, and 2021. From 2014 onwards, Hamas created a mutually beneficial relationship with the terrorist group ISIS in Sinai in 2014. Perceiving this as a threat, Egypt applied a very heavy blockage on Hamas smuggling. Following the last major altercation with Hamas in 2021, Israel allowed [Qatar to fund Hamas' civilian operations](#) and also let increasing numbers of Gazan laborers enter Israel to work.¹⁰

Although Hamas are Sunni Muslims, in recent years, [they have connected well with Iran](#), the main Shiite regional power. Iran has trained, advised, and, to a certain extent, armed Hamas terrorists.¹¹

Why did Hamas attack Israel on October 7th?

The question of timing is an interesting one. Many analysts believe that an approaching [normalization agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia](#) brokered by the United States was key to understanding Hamas's motivation to attack now. Saudi Arabia is one of the leading Sunni Arab states and contains within its borders the holiest sites of Islam (Mecca and Medina). A normalization agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia would probably have brought with it an opening of diplomatic relations between Israel and other Sunni states such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Further, Saudi Arabia seems prepared to offer financial support to the Palestinian Authority, the governing body in the West Bank, in order to improve the quality of life for Palestinians there. Lastly, for Saudi Arabia to recognize the legitimacy of the state of Israel would have suggested Saudi Arabia's support for a two-state solution, with a Palestinian state next to the Jewish and democratic state of Israel.¹²

Hamas interprets such a strengthening of the Palestinian Authority and the improvement in the lives of Palestinians living in the West Bank as a threat to Hamas' power in Gaza because Gazan Palestinians would have seen how a peace process with Israel had the potential of better living conditions and economic prosperity. Further, Hamas explained that one of the reasons for their attack on civilians was to capture hostages that could be exchanged for Palestinian detainees in Israel.¹³

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/polls-show-majority-gazans-were-against-breaking-ceasefire-hamas-and-hezbollah>

¹⁰ The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (Ed.). (n.d.). *The Israel-Hamas War 2023: Frequently asked questions*.

¹¹ Cleveland, C., & Pollock, D. (2023, October 10). *Polls show majority of Gazans were against breaking ceasefire*.

¹² Snell, E. (2023, October 5). *Ignoring the Palestinians brings intifada, history shows*. Ynetnews.com. Retrieved December 26, 2023, from <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/rje9f42et>

¹³ Pacchiani, G., & AFP. (2023, October 8). *Hamas deputy chief anticipates hostages will be swapped for Palestinian prisoners*. The Times of Israel. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from

How did the war between Israel & Hamas break out?

On October 7th, both the Jewish Sabbath day of rest and also a Jewish festival called Simchat Torah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad (an Iranian-affiliated radical Islamist organization), and other Gazans succeeded in surprising the Israeli defense establishment. It began at 6:30 AM with barrages of rockets and missiles targeting Israeli civilian populations throughout the southern part of the country. Simultaneously, Hamas used explosive drones to take out Israeli surveillance cameras all along the border barrier as well as a cyber attack that cut off any signals that would have activated automatic machine guns protecting the area. Hamas [terrorists set off explosives along 10 points](#) along the barrier, breaching it. This was immediately followed by bulldozers that widened the breaches, enabling the terrorists to swiftly enter into Israel in pick-up trucks, motorcycles, and other vehicles. Hundreds of Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists invaded 22 Israeli villages and towns, most of them small agricultural communities. They murdered civilians in their homes, sexually assaulted females, and brutally killed babies, children, and elderly people in front of their families. A group of terrorists assaulted a music rave that was dedicated to peace, murdering more than 360 revelers with heavy machine guns. Several Israeli army bases were also caught completely off-guard and soldiers were killed in their sleep or unarmed.

It took the Israeli defense establishment three days to either kill or capture the hundreds of terrorists who were embedded in the civilian communities. At least 240 people were dragged into the Gaza Strip by Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other Gazans. Ultimately, the estimate is that some 3000 Hamas terrorists and their accomplices managed to invade Israel. About half were killed by Israeli forces, either inside Israel or while fleeing back to the Gaza Strip. It was only after the Israeli army managed to regain control over the areas of invasion within Israel that Israel went on the offensive and began to bombard the Gaza Strip. Two weeks later, the Israeli army invaded the northern part of the Gaza Strip.¹⁴

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-deputy-chief-anticipates-hostages-will-be-swapped-for-palestinian-prisoners/>

¹⁴ Kubovich, Y. (2023, October 17). *The first hours of the Israel-Hamas War: What actually happened?* Haaretz. Retrieved December 27, 2023, from <https://www.haaretz.com/haaretz-explains/2023-10-17/ty-article-magazine/.premium/the-first-hours-of-the-israel-hamas-war-what-actually-took-place/0000018b-38bc-doac-a39f-b9be58df0000>

Who are the different parties in this war?

When one looks superficially, it appears that on one side of the conflict is Israel and on the other side are Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other smaller terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip. However, within several days of the outbreak of the conflict, Hezbollah—a Lebanese Islamist terror organization backed by Iran that, like Hamas, is hostile to Israel¹⁵—began to shoot rockets and anti-tank projectiles across Israel’s northern border, attacking Israeli military personnel and positions. Within a few days, Hezbollah broadened their targets to include Israeli civilians. The U.S. sent two aircraft carrier task forces to the Mediterranean and President Biden warned both Hezbollah and Iran not to attack Israel. Shiite rebels in Yemen, called Houthis (also backed and armed by Iran) shot ballistic missiles towards Israel and U.S. forces. Iranian-supported Shiite militias in Syria and Iraq shot rockets at U.S. military bases in those countries. Both the U.S. and Israel have responded to these attacks. Both Israel and the U.S. have an interest in preventing the spreading of the conflict into a multi-front war. On January 10th, the U.S. and the U.K. attacked multiple military installations in Houthi-controlled Yemen.¹⁶ There were follow-up U.S. operations to take out Houthi radar stations as well as missile launching pads.

How is the war connected to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Israelis and the Palestinians, representing two nationality groups that lay claim to the same small territory between the Jordan River in the East and the Mediterranean River in the West, have been in a national conflict for a little more than one hundred years. In the past thirty years, the United States has made several major attempts to conclude a peace agreement between the two sides. For the past ten years, both sides have rejected any compromises and peace negotiations have ceased completely.

¹⁵ Reuters (Ed.). (2023, November 11). *Hezbollah says front with Israel will remain active*. Retrieved December 27, 2023, from <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hezbollah-says-front-with-israel-will-remain-active-2023-11-11/#:~:text=Hezbollah%2C%20founded%20by%20Iran's%20Revolutionary,Lebanese%2DIsraeli%20frontier%20since%20Oct>

¹⁶ Eric Schmitt & Helene Cooper. (2024, January 10). *U.S. Missiles Strike Targets in Yemen Linked to the Houthis*. Retrieved January 17, 2024 from <https://www.timesofisrael.com/medicines-for-hostages-in-qatari-french-deal-arrive-in-egypt-en-route-to-gaza/>

Hamas' stance from the start has been a rejection of any peace with Israel and the destruction of the Jewish state of Israel. Hamas has made several attempts to undermine peace between Israelis and Palestinians. For example, during the 1990s, when Israel and the Palestinian Authority were working together, Hamas terrorists exploded buses and entertainment venues all over Israel, killing many civilians.

One of the potential major results of the present conflict is the complete collapse of any hopes for peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians for the foreseeable future. Israelis have lost a sense of basic personal security and any trust in a Palestinian partner for peace. It also foretells a worsening of conditions for the Palestinians, both in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank. Further, the present Israeli government does not support an independent state for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.¹⁷

¹⁷ Sharon, J., & TOI Staff. (2023, December 17). *Pointing to Hamas's 'little state,' Netanyahu touts his role blocking 2-state solution*. The Times of Israel. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://www.timesofisrael.com/pointing-to-hamass-little-state-netanyahu-touts-role-blocking-2-state-solution/>

What are the main dilemmas facing Israel at this moment?

Israel is facing several critical dilemmas at this time:

- a. Fighting an enemy that has deliberately embedded itself among a large civilian population in a densely built-up urban environment while minimizing the harm of non-combatants;
- b. Bringing back home the more than 130 (as of January 17, 2024) hostages still held in the Gaza Strip while fighting the terrorists who committed the atrocities of October 7th;
- c. Distancing Hamas far from the Israeli civilian population and reinstating basic personal security for the citizens of Israel;
- d. Avoiding multiple war fronts with Iranian proxies such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Shiite militias in Syria and Iraq, and the Shiite Yemeni Houthis, all of whom have been attacking Israel since October 7th;
- e. Deterring Hezbollah from attacking Israel from the North in order to enable the 100,000 Israeli civilians who have been evacuated from their homes to return to their residences (this includes many Arab citizens of Israel living in Northern Israel); and
- f. Reinstating strategic deterrence that will prevent Iran and its proxies (Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Shiite militias in Syria and Iraq) from attacking Israel.

How does the US perceive Hamas?

[The United States](#) (as well as the European Union, Canada, Egypt, and Japan) has designated Hamas as a terror organization.¹⁸ Therefore, [Hamas is cut off](#) from the financial aid that the U.S. provides the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.¹⁹

¹⁸ Bureau of Counterterrorism (Ed.). (2021). *Foreign terrorist organizations*. US Department of State. Retrieved December 27, 2023, from <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

¹⁹ Robinson, K. (2023, October 31). *Backgrounder: What Is Hamas?* Retrieved December 12, 2023, from <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hamas>

What is the US government's official policy regarding the war?

The U.S. administration headed by [President Joe Biden](#) has consistently supported Israel in its fight against Hamas since October 7th. The first two actions taken by the United States were to send an aircraft carrier task force to the Eastern Mediterranean and to immediately airlift large quantities of munitions necessary for Israel to prosecute the war in the best way possible. This was followed by the visit to Israel of the most senior officials of the U.S. government including Secretary of State Blinken, Secretary of Defense Austin, National Security Advisor Sullivan, senior U.S. generals and the President himself. The government also approved a \$14 Billion aid package to Israel and has also sent an additional aircraft carrier task force to the region as well more than 2000 Marines. The U.S. Navy has intercepted several ballistic missiles shot at Israel from Yemen. President Biden has publicly warned Iran and Hezbollah not to enter the war.²⁰ In addition, the U.S. has defended Israel in the international arena helping to fend off condemnation in the UN and the International Court of Justice.

While the United States has been supportive of Israel, the President and his advisors have urged Israel to minimize civilian casualties in the Gaza Strip, to open up humanitarian corridors to provide aid to the Gazans, and to let fuel into the Strip. President Biden has also been pushing Israel to come up with a viable “day after” plan so that the Palestinians have a positive future horizon. He has also condemned the illegal acts of rogue Israeli settlers who have been harming Palestinians in the West Bank. The United States has been applying its diplomatic influence to try and free the hostages being held by Hamas and Islamic Jihad (there are U.S. citizens who are hostages, as well).

²⁰ TOI Staff. (2023, October 18). Biden: World did nothing in the Holocaust. We will not stand by and do nothing again. Times of Israel.
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/biden-world-did-nothing-in-the-holocaust-we-will-not-stand-by-and-do-nothing-again/>

How is the war viewed politically in the US?

On October 19th, [the Senate](#) passed a resolution supporting Israel with a majority of 97 Senators voting in favor (out of 100 members of the Senate).²¹ The [House of Representatives](#) followed suit on October 25th with a majority of 412 members voting to affirm US support of Israel in its efforts against Hamas and condemning the latter's attack against the Jewish State.²² As the war has continued, there have been calls for a ceasefire, including from 64 Congresspeople (as of January 11, 2024).²³ President Biden has begun to receive criticism from part of the Democratic party.

Where do other regional players stand on the war (in the Middle East)?

The only two Middle Eastern countries to unequivocally condemn Hamas's atrocities on October 7th are the U.A.E. (United Arab Emirates) and Bahrain, which only recently normalized relations with Israel. Most of the Arab states that have diplomatic relations with Israel have either remained silent or have criticized Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip since the war began. These include Egypt and Jordan. [Turkey](#) has actually been supportive of Hamas. [Islamic religious leaders](#) have either been silent on Hamas's actions or have supported them.²⁴ [A minority have publicly condemned](#) what Hamas and Islamic Jihad did, while declaring that their actions violate Islamic law and ethics.²⁵

²¹ Congress.gov (Ed.). (2023, October 19). *S.Res.417 - A resolution standing with Israel against terrorism*. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-resolution/417/actions?s=5&r=8&q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22israel%22%7D>

²² Congress.gov (Ed.). (2023, October 25). *H.Res.771 - Standing with Israel as it defends itself against the barbaric war launched by Hamas and other terrorists*. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-resolution/771/actions?s=6&r=10&q=%7B%22search%22%3A%22israel%22%7D>

²³ CAIR California (Ed.). (2024, January 11). *Over 60 members of Congress have called for a ceasefire in Gaza*. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://ca.cair.com/losangeles/updates/over-60-members-of-congress-have-called-for-a-ceasefire-in-gaza/>

²⁴ Zelin, A. (2023, October). *Survey of Islamic and Islamist responses to the Hamas attack*. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/sites/default/files/pdf/zelin-islamist-responses-hamas-attack-Oct2023.pdf>

²⁵ Bar On, D. (2023, October 19). *Is Hamas really like ISIS? Experts explain*. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://www.haaretz.com/haaretz-explains/2023-10-19/ty-article-magazine/.highlight/is-hamas-really-like-isis-experts-explain/0000018b-493f-d1fd-a59f-edbfbe090000>

Where does the international community stand on the war?

The U.S., [U.K.](#), [Germany](#), [the Czech Republic](#), [Austria](#), and the [EU](#) have all come out in support of Israel and have condemned Hamas's actions. [Germany](#) and the [Czech Republic](#) have provided some military aid to Israel, particularly during the first week and a half of the conflict. Some of the member states of the European Union have called for a ceasefire and are also offering humanitarian aid to the Palestinians in Gaza.

Does Israel have the right to go to war in the wake of the Hamas attack on Oct 7th?

On October 7th, Hamas and its partners (Islamic Jihad and other terrorist or criminal organizations) committed war crimes against Israel and its civilian population.

[Hamas's killing of at least 1200](#) Israeli civilians (including children) during its attack on Israeli territory violated international humanitarian law designed to protect civilians and their property during war. These provisions include Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which requires humane treatment of civilians and noncombatants; Article 51 of the conventions' Protocol I, which protects civilian populations from attack; and a host of provisions on war crimes and crimes against humanity in Articles 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which apply to Hamas leaders and fighters. Additionally, Hamas's continuous, indiscriminate rocket attacks against Israeli civilian structures and individuals also violates these treaties and international law.²⁶

The Right to Self-Defense: It is an indisputable fact that Hamas and its collaborators attacked, murdered and committed atrocities to Israeli and foreign civilians in Israel on October 7th. [International law recognizes the rights of states](#) to use force in self-defense.²⁷ Israel is a member state of the United Nations and Article 51 of the UN Charter states that "nothing shall impair the right of... self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations."

²⁶ Scheffer, D. J. (2023, October 19). *What international law has to say about the Israel-Hamas War*. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://www.cfr.org/article/what-international-law-has-say-about-israel-hamas-war>

²⁷ Schmitt, M. N. (2023, October 10). *Israel - Hamas Symposium 2023: The legal context of operations Al-Aqsa Flood and Swords of Iron*. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://lieber.westpoint.edu/legal-context-operations-al-aqsa-flood-swords-of-iron/>

Does Israel have an obligation to go to war with Hamas in the wake of the attacks on Oct 7th?

Every country/nation has an inherent responsibility for the safety and security of its citizens and residents. Like any other country in the world, [Israel has an obligation to protect its citizens from terror attacks](#).²⁸ At the onset of the pogrom, Hamas held more than 240 hostages, 95% of whom were civilians, in the Gaza Strip. These include babies, children, elderly men and women, mothers, as well as foreign nationals who have nothing to do with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Thai, Nepalese, Filipino and other foreign workers).

Before and After Israel launched a counter-offensive as a response to the terrorist atrocities, Hamas has continued to fire thousands of missiles and rockets targeting civilians. Consequently, [Israel has both a legal right and a moral responsibility to attack Hamas in order to protect its people](#).²⁹

Did Hamas have the right to attack Israel the way it did on Oct 7th (in terms of international law and based on normative acceptable behavior)?

Attacking, killing, raping, torturing, and burning alive civilians are prohibited in international law and [are considered war crimes, attempted genocide and crimes against humanity](#)³⁰. Therefore, Hamas had no legal right to massacre Israeli (and non-Israeli) civilians, rape Israeli women, murder babies, torture families, and attempt to burn people alive in their homes.

²⁸ Scheffer, D. J. (2023, October 19). *What international law has to say about the Israel-Hamas War*. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://www.cfr.org/article/what-international-law-has-say-about-israel-hamas-war>

²⁹ Schmitt, M. N. (2023, October 10). *Israel - Hamas Symposium 2023: The legal context of operations Al-Aqsa Flood and Swords of Iron*. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://lieber.westpoint.edu/legal-context-operations-al-aqsa-flood-swords-of-iron/>

³⁰ Baker, A. (2023, October 9). *Hamas and Islamic Jihad are criminally liable for war crimes*. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://jcpa.org/hamas-and-islamic-jihad-are-criminally-liable-for-war-crimes/>

When has the US ever found itself in a similar situation?

The United States has found itself in similar but not identical situations in the past. Twenty-two years ago, Al-Qaeda (a radical Islamist terror organization, not dissimilar to Hamas) launched a murderous attack on U.S. soil, murdering close to 3000 people in NYC, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania (the attacks of 9/11). This was an unwarranted mega-terror attack against Americans. The U.S. response was to invade two Moslem countries – Iraq & Afghanistan – attempting to apprehend the perpetrators and to tamp down on international terror. At least [70,000 Afghani civilians](#) died in the twenty-year U.S. presence in Afghanistan.³¹ An estimated [300,000 Iraqi civilians](#) were killed due to U.S. and Allied military activity in Iraq between 2003-2023.³²

In 1941, Japan surprise attacked the U.S. Naval base at [Pearl Harbor](#), killing 2403 Americans, 68 of whom were civilians. As a response, the U.S. entered the Second World War against Japan (and subsequently against Nazi Germany as well). While the U.S. armed forces directed their initial responses to fighting the Japanese and German militaries, at some point they partnered with their British allies to jointly attack Germany and Japan.

During WWII, the U.S. targeted both Japanese and German civilians as part of their war effort. In the case of the former, America dropped two atomic bombs on Japan, [killing over 100,000 civilians](#).³³ The U.S. and British militaries carpet-bombed German cities during the Second World War. This destroyed more than [4.8 million housing units, rendering over 13 million Germans homeless](#), as well as killing hundreds of thousands of Germans.³⁴ Neither country—Imperial Japan & Nazi Germany—had killed large numbers of American civilians, but both had committed war crimes and crimes against humanity: Imperial Japan against the Chinese and Koreans and Nazi Germany against Jewish and Slavic populations such as the Poles, Belarussians, and Ukrainians.

However, during the Second World War, the U.S. did not justify its actions against German or Japanese civilians based on the Nazi genocide or the Japanese atrocities against Chinese and Korean civilians. The idea behind hitting the civilian population rested on [“demoralizing” the enemy](#).³⁵ Further, too many British and American pilots were getting shot down as they tried to do daytime precision bombing that would have minimized civilian deaths.

³¹ Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs (Ed.). (2023, March). *Afghan civilians*. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians/afghan>

³² Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs (Ed.). (2023, March). *Iraqi civilians*. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians/iraqi>

³³ National Archives Museum (Ed.). (2020, August 26). *Featured document display: The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki*. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://museum.archives.gov/featured-document-display-atomic-bombing-hiroshima-and-nagasaki>

³⁴ Jacobs, F. (2023, February 6). *The horrors of World War II air war, in one stark map*. The Big Think. Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://bigthink.com/strange-maps/air-war-germany-map/>

³⁵ Maier, C. S. (2005). *Targeting the city: Debates and silences about the aerial bombing of World War II*. International Review of the Red Cross, 87(859). https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/irrc_859_maier.pdf

Have there been serious attempts to sign a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians?

Between [1993-2014](#) there were multiple attempts to come to a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians represented by the Palestinian Authority.³⁶ Usually, [radicals on both sides](#) (who were not representative of the majority) took actions to collapse the peace talks.³⁷

Hamas was opposed to any peace with Israel as declared in its founding charter of 1988: “There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals, and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors.”

What has Hamas’ role been in relation to attempts to find a peaceful solution between Israel and the Palestinians?

Hamas’s role has been to try and prevent any peaceful solution between Israel and the Palestinians due to their [radical Islamist and antisemitic ideology](#) and political platform as expressed in their founding charter from 1988.³⁸

³⁶ Miller, A. D. (2023, November 21). *Transcript: Ezra Klein interviews Aaron David Miller* (Interview by E. Klein). Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/21/podcasts/transcript-ezra-klein-interviews-aaron-miller.html>

³⁷ Bazelon, E. (2023, November 20). *Was peace ever possible?* Retrieved January 16, 2024, from <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/11/20/magazine/israel-gaza-oslo-accords.html?searchResultPosition=39>

³⁸ Hamas. (2008). *Hamas Covenant 1988*. The Avalon Project. Retrieved October 30, 2023, from https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp