

The Big Parklands Paper



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For Peace
من أجل السلام
لشalom

What is happening in Gaza?

In a Special Edition of the newspaper, we look at conflict in Palestine and the situation in Gaza.

The current war in Gaza started on Saturday 7th October when soldiers belonging to the Palestinian organisation Hamas broke out of Gaza and launched a surprise attack on Israel. Hamas is the elected government of Palestinians living in Gaza but it is also designated as a terrorist organisation by most of the world's governments (including our own).

The attack on Israel was shocking. The attack involved the launch of thousands of rockets into Israeli territory, rockets that fell onto communities throughout southern Israel. It also involved a breakout of armed fighters from Gaza who attacked communities in southern Israel. As well as killing people, the attackers took some people hostage. The fate of those hostages remains unknown. Many of these attacks deliberately targeted civilians and Human Rights Watch have designated them as a war crime.

Following the initial Hamas attacks, Israel has responded with a blockade of Gaza, huge air strikes on Gaza and Lebanon and deadly raids throughout Palestine. Israel has also threatened to launch a ground invasion of Gaza - one of the most densely populated areas of the world.

The situation in Gaza is a humanitarian crisis: civilians in Gaza have had no power for nearly two weeks; the territory has run out of food, water and medicine; Israeli bombing has flattened tower blocks, schools and hospitals, creating thousands of refugees. The only entrance into Gaza (through the Rafah Crossing into Egypt) is currently closed because of bombing.

As the war enters its second week, there are fears that thousands of civilians could die and the war could spread to other parts of Palestine and the Middle East. Currently, over 3,500 Palestinians have died and over 1,400 Israelis have died.



Context

Here we look at some of the background of the current conflict. For many people, these facts are contested but here we are trying to answer some of the big questions that pupils may have.

Why is the war happening?

The current conflict in Gaza is part of an ongoing conflict in Israel/Palestine. The conflict started in 1948 when Jewish groups who were fighting against the British Empire, declared the state of Israel. Jewish fighters used terrorist tactics to attack the British, who eventually left Palestine. Those same fighters then ethnically cleansed Palestinian Arabs (both Muslim and Christian) from their homes to create a Jewish majority state of Israel. Many survivors of the Holocaust moved to Israel as it was perceived to offer a place of safety.

The formation of Israel created one of the world's largest refugee populations - Palestinians were forced to flee their lands and live in refugee camps. Those camps are located across the Middle East but many refugees were forced into places like Gaza, the last remnants of historic Palestine.

Following wars in the 1960s and 1970s, Israel came to occupy Gaza and the West Bank (now recognised as the Palestinian Territories). Gaza, since then, has been become densely populated and has, for long periods, been cut off from the outside world. Human Rights Watch describes Gaza as the "world's largest open air prison." It was from Gaza that Hamas launched its surprise attack last Saturday.

What is life like in Gaza?

Life in Gaza is difficult. Many people are unable to leave the territory and getting in from the outside is hard. Periodic violence means that many people have ...

loved ones who have died. Those conflicts also destroy homes, schools and hospitals. Access to food, water, electricity and medicine is always uncertain, with long periods where one or other of these is cut off. Again, Human Rights Watch has described the Israeli blockade of Gaza as apartheid and a crime against humanity.

What are the solutions?

There are lots of calls for a ceasefire and peace talks from people around the world, including from prominent people like Mo Salah. The situation in Palestine is complicated and difficult, however, and there isn't one agreed solution. Some favour a Two State Solution, where land is divided up between Israel and Palestine. Others argue this is unworkable because of the sheer numbers of refugees and therefore argue for a One State Solution, a little like Northern Ireland, where both communities share control. While they are discussed, neither of these solutions is on the table right now.

Why is Israel/Palestine so controversial?

Discussion about Palestine and Israel is often passionate and can be controversial. For many supporters of Israel, and many Jews around the world, Israel offers the only truly safe haven after the Holocaust in the Second World War. They argue that a strong Jewish state is the only thing that protects against another Holocaust. They see criticism of Israel as endangering that safety.

For supporters of the Palestinians, Israel is an apartheid state (a country that uses racist laws and violence to oppress specific groups of people) that is guilty of war crimes. They see the suffering and oppression in the daily lives of Palestinians and are angry that the world doesn't do more to help them.



For pupils at Parklands, the conflict can seem to be horrific and confusing. Some members of our school community are directly affected by these events from both sides of the conflict, and we have a duty to try and understand what is happening.

If you have any questions or views you would like to share about the conflict, please email:

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If you want to learn more yourself, read respected websites like [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#) where facts are verified.