

Human Rights Violations in Gaza: An Analytical Review of the Positions of Arab Countries and Pakistan

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Abstract

The conflict in Gaza following 7 October 2023 produced one of the gravest humanitarian and human-rights crises of the contemporary period. Large-scale civilian deaths, destruction of homes and public infrastructure, repeated displacement, and severe restrictions on food, water, medicine and shelter generated sustained concern under international human-rights law and international humanitarian law. This article examines the political, diplomatic and humanitarian positions adopted by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other Arab states, Iran, Pakistan, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). It finds broad rhetorical support for Palestinian rights but significant differences in policy instruments, diplomatic constraints and willingness to bear political or economic costs. Arab responses have frequently reflected security alignments, normalization policies and wider geopolitical interests, whereas Pakistan has retained a comparatively consistent policy of non-recognition of Israel and support for Palestinian self-determination. The article concludes that fragmented Muslim-state action and the limited enforcement capacity of the OIC have reduced their collective influence. Stronger diplomatic coordination, sustained humanitarian commitments, compliance with international law and a credible political process remain essential to protect civilians and advance Palestinian rights.

Keywords: Gaza; human-rights violations; Palestine; Pakistan foreign policy; Arab countries; Organization of Islamic Cooperation; international humanitarian law.

1. Introduction

Gaza has become one of the most consequential humanitarian, political and international legal questions of the present era. The hostilities that followed the Hamas-led attacks of 7 October 2023 drew worldwide attention and caused immense harm to civilians. Tens of thousands of Palestinians were reported killed, a large proportion of the population was repeatedly displaced, and access to food, water, medicines, fuel and adequate shelter was severely constrained. These conditions turned Gaza into a major humanitarian catastrophe and raised grave allegations under international human-rights and humanitarian law.

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The United Nations Charter, the Fourth Geneva Convention and customary rules governing the conduct of hostilities provide the principal legal framework for civilian protection, humanitarian relief, distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack.¹

The crisis also tested the capacity of international institutions. The United Nations, its humanitarian agencies and international courts took significant declaratory, relief and legal steps, yet political division—particularly within the Security Council—limited collective enforcement. This gap between legal norms and practical protection increased attention to the response of Muslim-majority states, especially Arab countries and Pakistan, from which political, diplomatic and humanitarian support for Palestinians was widely expected.²

Arab states have deep historical, religious and geographical links with Palestine. Most condemned attacks on civilians and demanded a ceasefire, but their responses were moderated by security partnerships, economic interests, relations with the United States, existing peace treaties, and—in some cases—normalization with Israel. Pakistan, by contrast, has treated support for Palestinian self-determination and non-recognition of Israel as enduring elements of its foreign policy. This study therefore asks how far official statements, diplomatic initiatives and practical measures by Arab states and Pakistan translated into effective support for the Palestinian population, and whether the Muslim world acted as a coherent political bloc.³

2. Human Rights and Humanitarian-Law Concerns in Gaza

The conflict caused death and destruction on both sides, but the parties possessed sharply unequal military capacities. Israel deployed advanced air power, armed drones, surveillance systems, artillery and ground forces across a densely populated territory. Israel maintained that it targeted military objectives and accused Hamas and other armed groups of operating from civilian areas. Even so, the density of Gaza, the scale of explosive force used, the destruction of residential areas and essential infrastructure, and repeated displacement orders produced an exceptionally high risk of civilian harm. International humanitarian law binds all parties: Palestinian armed groups are prohibited from deliberately attacking civilians and taking hostages, while Israel must distinguish civilians from combatants, respect proportionality, take feasible precautions, and facilitate humanitarian relief.⁴

The current war began with the Hamas-led assault of 7 October 2023, during which Israeli authorities reported that roughly 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals were killed and 251 people were taken hostage. Israel then launched a sustained military campaign in Gaza. Palestinian casualty totals in the manuscript were drawn from Gaza-based authorities and included people believed missing beneath rubble; United Nations reporting reproduces such figures with explicit source attribution and cautions that totals not verified by the UN remain attributable to the reporting authority. By 4 June 2025, for example, the Gaza Ministry of Health had reported at least 54,607 Palestinian deaths and more than 125,000 injuries. The destruction also

created immense reconstruction needs: a joint World Bank–European Union–United Nations assessment estimated recovery and reconstruction requirements at approximately US\$53 billion as of February 2025.⁵

The legal characterization of particular incidents requires evidence and competent adjudication. Nonetheless, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), in provisional-measures orders issued during 2024 in *South Africa v. Israel*, required Israel to take measures within the scope of the Genocide Convention and to enable urgently needed humanitarian assistance. Those orders did not decide the merits of the genocide allegation. Separately, the ICJ's July 2024 advisory opinion addressed the illegality and consequences of Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. These proceedings demonstrate that Gaza is not only a political crisis but also a central test of international legal accountability.⁶

3. Ceasefire and Prisoner-Exchange Agreements

Ceasefire and hostage-prisoner exchange arrangements repeatedly became the subject of competing allegations of non-compliance. A three-phase agreement was announced on 15 January 2025 and entered into effect on 19 January. It provided for a cessation of hostilities during its first phase, the release of hostages and Palestinian prisoners, increased humanitarian assistance and negotiations toward a more durable end to the war. The United Nations welcomed the agreement while emphasizing that implementation by all parties was essential.⁷

The arrangement remained fragile. Israeli authorities accused Hamas of delaying releases and failing to provide timely information about hostages; Hamas and Palestinian sources accused Israel of continued lethal attacks, restrictions on aid, delay in agreed withdrawals and refusal to reopen crossings fully. Disputes concerning the number and identity of persons to be exchanged, the sequencing of releases, military redeployment and the duration of the ceasefire complicated the mediation conducted principally by Egypt, Qatar and the United States. A later ceasefire announced on 10 October 2025 was likewise followed by reported deaths, injuries and serious access constraints; United Nations humanitarian reports continued to attribute casualty totals to the Gaza Ministry of Health.⁸

An academically defensible assessment must avoid attributing alleged treaty-breaking to an ethnic or religious community. Responsibility attaches to states, armed groups and identifiable decision-makers. The relevant questions are whether particular acts violated agreed terms, international humanitarian law or international human-rights law, and whether reliable evidence supports those conclusions.

4. Saudi Arabia's Position

Saudi Arabia occupies a leading position in the Arab and Islamic worlds and has not established diplomatic relations with Israel. Before 7 October 2023, discussions about possible Saudi-Israeli normalization were widely regarded as potentially transformative. The Gaza war, however, intensified the political importance of Palestinian statehood. In an official statement, the Kingdom declared that there would

be no diplomatic relations with Israel without an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 lines with East Jerusalem as its capital, an end to the war in Gaza, and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Strip.⁹

Saudi diplomacy combined calls for an immediate ceasefire and humanitarian access with support for a two-state solution and collective Arab-Islamic action. Riyadh hosted the extraordinary joint Arab-Islamic summits of November 2023 and November 2024. The 2024 resolution condemned attacks on civilians and violations of international law, rejected siege and starvation as methods of war, called for unrestricted humanitarian access, urged states to halt arms transfers to Israel, supported Palestinian membership in the United Nations, and called for international action regarding accountability. It also reaffirmed an independent and sovereign Palestinian state on the lines of 4 June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital.¹⁰

Saudi policy therefore became more explicit in linking normalization to Palestinian statehood. Yet its strategy remained primarily diplomatic: summit diplomacy, coalition-building, humanitarian assistance and support for international recognition, rather than a rupture with major Western security and economic partners. This illustrates the broader tension between principled support for Palestine and the geopolitical constraints shaping Arab state behaviour.¹¹

5. The United Arab Emirates and Other Arab States

The United Arab Emirates normalized relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords in September 2020 and subsequently developed extensive diplomatic, economic and technological ties. Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan also joined normalization processes, while Egypt and Jordan had concluded peace treaties with Israel in 1979 and 1994 respectively. The Gaza war did not immediately reverse these formal arrangements. Instead, the UAE combined continued bilateral relations with public condemnation of civilian harm, humanitarian relief efforts and support for an independent Palestinian state.¹²

On 26 October 2023—not 2024, as stated in the original Urdu manuscript—the foreign ministers of the UAE, Jordan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Egypt and Morocco issued a joint statement rejecting the targeting of civilians, forced displacement and collective punishment, and calling for respect for international law. Most Arab states supported General Assembly resolutions demanding a ceasefire. Jordan recalled its ambassador, and Bahrain announced diplomatic measures, but neither the long-standing peace treaties nor the Abraham Accords were collectively suspended.¹³

Public opinion was frequently more confrontational than official policy. Demonstrations and consumer boycotts occurred in Morocco, Bahrain, Oman, Jordan, Egypt and elsewhere. In Egypt, where public assembly is tightly regulated, boycott campaigns against brands perceived as supportive of Israel became a prominent channel of activism. These developments exposed a recurring gap between

popular solidarity with Palestinians and the cautious policies of governments concerned with domestic stability, economic costs and strategic relations.¹⁴

6. Iran's Position

Iran adopted the most confrontational rhetoric among the states considered in this study. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urged Muslim governments to interrupt the flow of oil, energy and commodities to Israel and to suspend political relations. Iranian leaders praised Palestinian armed resistance while denying that Iran had directed the 7 October attacks. Tehran's approach differed from that of most Arab governments because it combined diplomatic denunciation with long-standing political, financial and military support for members of the regional "axis of resistance."¹⁵

Iran's position projected ideological consistency and greater willingness to demand economic pressure. At the same time, its regional rivalry with Israel and the United States, and its relationships with armed non-state actors, meant that its Gaza policy also served broader strategic objectives. Thus, as with Arab states, humanitarian and principled claims cannot be separated entirely from geopolitical calculation.

7. Pakistan's Position on the Gaza War

Pakistan has supported Palestinian political rights since independence and has not recognized Israel. Its early position drew on the Muslim League's opposition to the partition of Palestine and on the arguments advanced by Pakistan's first foreign minister, Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, at the United Nations in 1947. Pakistan later voted against Israel's admission to the United Nations. Scholarly histories show that successive Pakistani governments treated solidarity with Palestine as an element of national identity, relations with Arab and Muslim states, and domestic political consensus.¹⁶

During the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948, 1967 and 1973, Pakistan expressed political support for Arab states and, in certain periods, offered military assistance. The Second Islamic Summit Conference, held in Lahore in February 1974 under Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, gave the Palestinian question a central place and included Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasser Arafat. The summit strengthened Pakistan's role in collective Islamic diplomacy and reinforced recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.¹⁷

After October 2023, Pakistan condemned attacks on Palestinian civilians, demanded a ceasefire, supported humanitarian relief, and reiterated the two-state formula based on the pre-1967 borders with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the capital of Palestine. In his address to the seventy-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 2024, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif described the destruction in Gaza as a grave human tragedy, urged international action, supported Palestinian statehood and called for Palestine's full United Nations membership.¹⁸

Pakistan also called for sustained political, financial and operational support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This position gained urgency after the Israeli Knesset adopted legislation

in October 2024 restricting UNRWA's operations and official contacts. United Nations officials warned that the measures would seriously obstruct essential services and humanitarian relief for Palestinian refugees.¹⁹

8. Pakistan and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

At the preparatory meeting for the fifteenth OIC Islamic Summit in The Gambia on 3 May 2024, Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, unhindered humanitarian aid, the return of displaced Palestinians, accountability for alleged war crimes, implementation of Security Council Resolution 2728, revival of an irreversible peace process, and reactivation of the OIC ministerial committee on Israeli aggression. He reaffirmed support for a secure, viable, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian state based on the pre-June 1967 borders with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.²⁰

This intervention demonstrated Pakistan's consistent use of multilateral forums. It also highlighted the institutional weakness of the OIC. The organization can articulate common positions, convene summits and coordinate diplomatic initiatives, but it cannot enforce resolutions against Israel or compel its own members to adopt uniform economic and political measures. Its influence therefore depends on the willingness of member states to implement collective decisions through national policy.

9. Solidarity with the Palestinian People

On the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, 29 November 2024, Pakistan renewed its support for Palestinian self-determination and an independent state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. It called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, humanitarian relief and decisive international action. The statement reflected continuity rather than a temporary reaction: official Pakistani policy has repeatedly described support for Palestine as a defining principle of foreign policy.²¹

10. The All Parties Conference

An All Parties Conference convened in Islamabad on 7 October 2024 brought together the President, Prime Minister and leaders of major political parties. Its resolution condemned Israeli military action, reaffirmed Palestinian self-determination, supported a viable, secure, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and endorsed Palestine's full membership of the United Nations. It also called on the Government of Pakistan to continue political, diplomatic and humanitarian support and designated 29 November 2024 as a day of solidarity.²²

The conference was significant because it showed cross-party agreement despite deep domestic political polarization. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also proposed a working group to convey Pakistan's position in major world capitals. The practical impact of such a group depends on sustained diplomatic engagement, coordination with other states and measurable objectives rather than symbolic visits alone.

11. The Extraordinary Arab-Islamic Summit

At the extraordinary Arab-Islamic summit held in Riyadh on 11 November 2024, Pakistan joined calls for an immediate ceasefire, unrestricted humanitarian assistance, an end to the use of siege and starvation, a prohibition on arms transfers to Israel, legal accountability and the creation of an independent Palestinian state. The summit resolution also supported implementation of Security Council Resolutions 2712, 2720, 2728 and 2735 and urged action toward Palestinian membership in the United Nations.²³

Pakistan's participation aligned its national position with the common Arab-Islamic platform. Nevertheless, the summit's broad language was not matched by a uniform mechanism for sanctions, trade restrictions or diplomatic suspension. The gap between collective declarations and coordinated implementation remained the principal limitation on Muslim-state influence.

12. The Corps Commanders' Conference

The 260th Corps Commanders' Conference, held on 17 October 2023 under Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, expressed Pakistan's diplomatic, moral and political support for the Palestinian people and reiterated a principled position in favour of a durable settlement and an end to unlawful occupation. This statement was consistent with the broader civil-military consensus on Palestine, although foreign policy formally remains the responsibility of the civilian government.²⁴

13. Public Demonstrations and Political Mobilization in Pakistan

Public solidarity was visible in rallies, marches, prayers and boycott campaigns across Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Quetta and other cities. Demonstrators demanded an end to bombardment and siege, criticized United States support for Israel, and called for stronger action by Muslim governments. Contemporary reporting documented large Jamaat-e-Islami gatherings in Islamabad and other cities, as well as demonstrations by religious parties, civil-society groups, students and professional associations.²⁵

13.1 Jamaat-e-Islami

Jamaat-e-Islami organized major marches and argued that verbal condemnation by Muslim governments was insufficient. Its leaders demanded an immediate ceasefire, humanitarian access, diplomatic pressure and a reassessment of relations with states supporting Israel. The party's mobilization helped keep Gaza prominent in domestic political discourse.²⁶

13.2 Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam and Other Religious Parties

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Pakistan Markazi Muslim League and other religious organizations observed protest days and held sermons, conferences and demonstrations. Their rhetoric emphasized Muslim unity and moral responsibility toward Palestinians. Some statements used highly inflammatory language; a scholarly account should record the political phenomenon without endorsing dehumanizing descriptions or calls for unlawful violence.²⁷

13.3 Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan organized “Labbaik Ya Aqsa” demonstrations under the leadership of Saad Hussain Rizvi and called for stronger action by Muslim states. As with other mass mobilizations, these events reflected the intensity of public feeling. They also demonstrated how the Palestinian question is incorporated into domestic religious and party politics, sometimes through rhetoric that exceeds the language of official diplomacy.²⁸

Across Pakistan, public attachment to the Palestinian cause has remained strong regardless of which party governs. No Pakistani government has established diplomatic relations with Israel. Yet consistency in recognition policy should be distinguished from practical effectiveness: Pakistan’s economic constraints, distance from the conflict and dependence on multilateral diplomacy limit the direct instruments available to it. Its most consequential contributions lie in coalition-building, humanitarian assistance, legal advocacy and sustained diplomatic support.²⁹

14. Analytical Assessment

The positions examined above reveal three broad patterns. First, nearly all Arab states, Iran, Pakistan and the OIC publicly affirmed Palestinian rights and condemned large-scale civilian harm. Second, the instruments they used differed sharply. Saudi Arabia relied on summit diplomacy and made Palestinian statehood a condition of normalization; the UAE retained normalized relations while combining humanitarian support with diplomatic criticism; Iran demanded economic rupture and supported armed resistance; and Pakistan maintained non-recognition, multilateral advocacy and humanitarian solidarity. Third, none of these approaches, individually or collectively, produced sufficient leverage to halt violations or secure a final political settlement.³⁰

The central explanatory factor is fragmentation. Arab and Muslim states do not form a unitary strategic bloc. Their relations with the United States, security concerns regarding Iran and Israel, economic priorities, domestic vulnerabilities and differing attitudes toward Hamas produce divergent policies. The OIC reflects these divisions: it can generate consensus language but lacks autonomous enforcement capacity. Consequently, Muslim-state diplomacy has been strongest in norm articulation—ceasefire, humanitarian access, statehood and accountability—and weakest in coordinated implementation.³¹

International institutions also face structural constraints. General Assembly resolutions express broad international opinion but are generally recommendatory; Security Council action is shaped by veto politics; international judicial processes are slow and depend on state cooperation; and humanitarian agencies cannot substitute for a political settlement. These constraints do not make international law irrelevant. Rather, they show why consistent documentation, legal accountability, arms-transfer scrutiny and state compliance are necessary if legal rules are to protect civilians in practice.³²

15. Research Findings

- The question of Palestine is not merely a territorial or diplomatic dispute; it is also a profound humanitarian, legal and moral question involving self-determination, civilian protection, displacement and the obligations of occupying and belligerent powers.
- The historical development of the conflict cannot be understood without reference to British Mandate policy, the Zionist movement, the 1947 partition proposal, the 1948 war, Palestinian displacement and the continuing occupation of territory captured in 1967.
- Palestinian civilians have experienced extensive loss of life, repeated displacement, destruction of homes and essential infrastructure, and severe restrictions on basic necessities. These conditions raise serious issues under international humanitarian and human-rights law.
- International institutions have taken important humanitarian, diplomatic and legal measures, but enforcement has been weakened by political division, veto power, non-compliance and dependence on state cooperation.
- Arab and Muslim states have not converted broad rhetorical solidarity into a coherent and sustained collective strategy. National geopolitical and economic interests continue to shape the limits of their responses.
- Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iran and Pakistan illustrate distinct models: conditional normalization and summit diplomacy; normalization combined with humanitarian and diplomatic pressure; confrontational resistance-oriented policy; and principled non-recognition with multilateral advocacy.
- Pakistan's support for Palestine is unusually stable across governments, political parties and major state institutions. Its policy is grounded in early diplomatic history, domestic consensus and identification with the right to self-determination.
- The OIC remains important as a forum for collective positions, but its effectiveness is constrained by the absence of binding enforcement tools and differences among its member states.
- A durable Middle Eastern peace requires protection of civilians, accountability for violations by all parties, an end to unlawful occupation, Palestinian political unity, and a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood.

16. Conclusion

The Gaza crisis exposed a profound gap between the international community's stated commitment to human rights and its capacity or willingness to enforce those commitments. Arab countries, Iran, Pakistan and the OIC broadly supported Palestinian rights, yet their strategies reflected distinct alliances, threat perceptions and domestic interests. Pakistan maintained a comparatively consistent diplomatic position, but neither it nor the wider Muslim world possessed a unified mechanism capable of decisively altering the course of the conflict. More effective action requires sustained coordination around verifiable objectives: civilian protection, unhindered humanitarian access, compliance with international law, support for credible

accountability mechanisms, responsible arms-transfer policies, Palestinian political representation, and a negotiated settlement that realizes the right to self-determination. Without these elements, repeated declarations of solidarity will continue to have limited practical effect.³³

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