



## Organization of Islamic Cooperation

### Maintaining Political Stability in the Middle East

#### **I. Background of Topic**

The Middle East as we know it today began due to collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1923. The British Empire and the Allied Powers divided the region into separate nations under British and French mandates in 1918 that were made official by the Treaty of Sevres in 1920. Political tensions stem back to the departure of European powers from the area in the 1940s. Egypt was the first to try for independence and movements stem back to the 1920s. Under the Unilateral Declaration of Egyptian Independence, the Kingdom of Egypt was formally recognized by Great Britain, but the nation's troops were not withdrawn until 1947. Most countries emerged as monarchies or dictatorships. Of the several authoritarian regimes in the Middle East are Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Yemen, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania. Although several republics exist, the sole democracy is Israel.

The only nation in the area without an authoritarian regime is Israel, which has been the main point of contention in the Middle East. The inspiration for Israel was Theodor Herzl's Zionist movement. Its creation in 1948 by Britain, it has been disliked by its surrounding Arab nations. The Arab nations and Israel have come in contact thirteen times in less than 65 years, four of which were all-out wars. The first was the War of Independence which was started because Israel's partition was resented by the surrounding nations. Israel won and an armistice was signed in 1949. Seven years later, the Suez War in which Israel invaded Egypt after the nationalization of the Suez Canal with the assistance of Britain and France occurred. The attacks were primarily centered at reinstating the canal to Western control and removing the Egyptian



president, Gamal Abdel Nasser. Israel achieved most of its objectives but pressure from the United States and the Soviet Union caused them to withdraw. The most famous war was the Six Day War in 1967, in which Israel defeated most of the Middle East in roughly six days. The Arab states were sparked by missiles launched from Israel. Israel continued to win the war swiftly and assumed control of nearly double its territory. Israel, however, returned the assumed territory soon after. It is unknown whether the missiles were offensive or defensive. The last major war was the Yom Kippur War in which both Syria and Egypt invaded on the holiest day in the Jewish year: Yom Kippur. This invasion was done in response to Israeli occupied land in the Sinai Peninsula. The United States aided Israel, while the Soviet Union aided Syria and Egypt. This conflict nearly led to a nuclear confrontation. Israel was still able to quell the forces, but its aura of invincibility fell. Also, the United States took a more diplomatic approach to the situation by initiating peace talks. Tension still exists in the area because Israel's military still operates in the Gaza Strip and other Arab occupied areas. Cold War tensions were greater amplified with the establishment of the Ba'ath regime in Iraq. Notably anti-Soviet, the leader of the party, Saddam Hussein, greatly aligned with the United States. Iraq was seen as the buffer state of the United States against the Soviet Union.

Many previous regimes have been toppled in the goal of achieving greater prosperity as a nation. Various motivations for the Arab spring were problems regarding absolute monarchy, human rights violations, government corruption, unemployment, and poverty. As a result of the Arab Spring, many countries are experiencing anarchy. Currently, the status of the governments of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya is pending. In Tunisia, protests started due to high unemployment, food inflations, corruption and lack of freedom of speech. Due to the powerful protests that ensued, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali stepped down on January 14, 2011, after 23 years in



power. This set off a reaction in the Middle East known as the Arab Spring. Almost immediately after, on January 25, protests began in Egypt against the military dictator, Hosni Mubarak. By February 11, Mubarak had fled the nation and the military assumed control in the interim between governments. On March 19, amendments to a new constitution were passed. Libya was probably the most contested area with political instability recently. Beginning February 17, the people of Libya began a revolt against Muammar Gaddafi. The National Transitional Council, established by Mustafa Abdul Jalil, became the primary organization of the rebel groups. Soon a civil war broke out between the rebel groups and Gaddafi's military forces, coercing foreign intervention. With the assistance of NATO and the establishment of a no-fly zone, the rebel forces were able to take control of a majority of Libyan territory. On the morning of October 20, Gaddafi was captured and killed by the rebels. Jalil now leads the interim government.

Uprisings have occurred in various other nations including Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen. Protests have sprung up in Algeria, Iraq, Morocco, Jordan, and Oman. With such unrest in the area and with little experience with democracy, there exists fear for the future of the Middle East. The distressed people live in danger of various forms of violence from their leaders. With inchoate nations such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, political stability must be reinstalled.

## **II. UN Involvement**

The United Nations has been very active in keeping peace between Israel and Palestine. First, General Assembly Resolution 181, passed in 1947, stressed that Jerusalem preserve Christian, Jewish, and Muslim interests. Security Council Resolution 242, passed in 1967, called for the removal of Israeli troops from the territories they gained in the Six Day War. It also affirmed the sovereignty of all the nations in the region (Syria, Israel, Egypt, etc.). Security



Council Resolution 338, passed in 1973, called for the ceasefire of the Yom Kippur War. To introduce the idea of a two state solution in Israel and Palestine, Security Council Resolution 1397 was passed in 2002.

Regarding Iraq, several resolutions have been passed regarding their conflicts with Iran and Iraq. In reference to humanitarian issues in the country, Security Council Resolution 986, passed in 1995, set up the Oil for Food program in which their export of oil would finance humanitarian aid. In 2002, Security Council Resolution 1441 declared that Iraq welcome UN inspectors to check for biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. Security Council Resolution 1546, passed in 2004, called for democratic elections to take place no later than January 2005.

Iran's nuclear program has also received a lot of attention from the UN Security Council. In 2006, Security Council Resolution 1696 demanded that Iran stop its nuclear program. Subsequent resolutions (1737, 1747, 1803) all called for sanctions of uranium and condemned the nation's continuation of enrichment. The most recent sanction was instated in 2010 by Security Council Resolution 1929.

Libya has recently greatly interested the United Nations. Security Council Resolution 1970 condemned the violence used by Muammar Gaddafi against civilians. Subsequent resolutions (1973, 2009) condemn Gaddafi for not complying with the previous resolutions. Resolution 2009 reiterates that the UN "should lead the international community in supporting the Libyan-led transition and rebuilding process aimed at establishing a democratic, independent, and united Libya."

### **III. Possible Solutions**

One solution is for the United Nations to become actively involved with the nations with several protesters. In nations such as Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen, where protest are especially



intense, the UN should send forces to protect those in revolt. Right now, the civilians are facing governmental violence. The United Nations could also enforce economic sanctions on the nations who do commit crimes against humanity in the region.

#### **IV. Bloc Positions**

Israel would agree more with the western nations (Great Britain, the United States, and France). The Islamic nations agree with each other against Israel and most western nations. Nations with good relations with the United States are Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Kuwait, Pakistan, and Morocco. These nations receive billions of dollars in aid, with Egypt and Israel receiving the most. Most of the nations thrive off of the oil hunger of the western nations.

#### **V. Guiding Questions**

What relationship does your country have with the United States?

What is your nation's primary goal to accomplish amidst the uprisings?

What is nation's policy towards its citizens?

What economic condition is your country in?

How is your nation dealing with rebellion from within?