



المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات  
Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies

Political Studies Unit

Symposium

# The United Nations and Palestine

24 October 2023

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# About the Symposium

Over the course of its 78 years of existence, the United Nations has played a significant role in the Palestinian Question, after inheriting the responsibility from the dissolved League of Nations. The UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of 1947 on the partition of Palestine is one of the most consequential events in the modern history of Palestine. This resolution is widely regarded as the catalyst for the tragedy endured by the Palestinian people and the broader Arab region, as it enabled the formation of the State of Israel to the detriment of the Palestinian people.

Since the 1948 Nakba (catastrophe), which refers to the forced displacement of more than 750,000 Palestinians, the UN Security Council has adopted dozens of resolutions, demanding that Israel withdraw from the Palestinian and Arab territories it has occupied since 1967, refrain from deporting Palestinians from the occupied territories, and guarantee their right of return. These resolutions have also called on Israel to suspend its arbitrary measures to alter the status of the city of Jerusalem, and other ongoing violations of Palestinians' rights guaranteed by international law, starting with the right to self-determination. The most recent Security Council resolution on Palestine was 2334 of 2016, which called on Israel to immediately and completely cease the illegal settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

The UN Security Council resolutions, which are legally binding for all UN members, have remained a dead letter due to Israel's lack of respect for international law and the support it enjoys from permanent members of the Council. The Council's failure to implement its decisions to end the occupation has contributed to Israel's continuation of its settlement policies and the erosion of the rights of the Palestinian people. The ongoing war on the civilian population of the Gaza Strip, which has been under siege for more than 17 years, is just the latest manifestation of the UN's failure to protect the lives and rights of millions of Palestinians under the Israeli occupation.

In view of this significant UN role in Palestine, and to mark the annual United Nations Day on 24 October, the Political Studies Unit at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies is organizing a panel on the role of the United Nations in Palestine, featuring distinguished scholars who have worked in the United Nations.

# Timetable

<p><b>12:00 - 14:00</b></p>	<p><b>Moderator: Aicha Elbasri</b></p> <p><b>Michael Lynk:</b> The UN and the Triumph of Realpolitik over International Law in Palestine</p> <p><b>Abdelhamid Siyam:</b> The United Nations and the Israeli War on Gaza: Between Absence and Neglect</p> <p><b>Ghassan ElKahlout:</b> Assessing the UN Response to Israeli Aggression in <b>the Gaza Strip:</b> Potential and Limitations</p>
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# Participants





**Michael Lynk**

Professor Emeritus at the Faculty of Law, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada, (1999-2022), where he taught courses in labour, human rights, disability, constitutional and administrative law. He served as Associate Dean of the Faculty (2008-2011). In May 2016, the UN Human Rights Council unanimously selected Professor Lynk for a six-year term as the 7th Special Rapporteur for the human rights situation in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967. In this capacity, he delivered regular reports to the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council on human rights trends in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. He completed his term in April 2022. He has written about his UN experiences in a 2022 book co-authored with Richard Falk and John Dugard, two of his predecessors as UN special rapporteurs: *Protecting Human Rights in Occupied Palestine: Working Through the United Nations* (Clarity Press, 2022).



## Abdelhamid Siyam

Lecturer of Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies at Rutgers University since 2007. During his 25-year career at the United Nations, he held several positions, starting at the Arabic Language Department and the Office of the Secretary-General. He has also served as a Chief of the Arabic Radio and News Centre at the Department of Public Information, and worked in several UN missions, including in Libya, Eritrea, Western Sahara, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan. His published works include a book titled *That Painful Day* on the 2003 bombing of the UN Headquarters in Baghdad. He recently completed a research project with the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies on United Nations mediation for multiple Arab issues such as Libya, Yemen, and Syria. A columnist at *Al Quds al-Araby* since 2008, Siyam is also a political analyst and television commentator with several Arab and international news outlets. He holds a PhD in International Relations from the City University of New York (CUNY).



## Ghassan Elkahlout

Director of the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies and an Associate Professor in Conflict Management and Humanitarian Action Program at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He holds a PhD in post-war reconstruction and development studies from the University of York, in the United Kingdom. His research and teaching focus on humanitarian work and post-war reconstruction, especially in the Arab region. He has worked in several international humanitarian institutions and has published numerous peer-reviewed articles in Arab and international academic journals. He is the author of *Humanitarian Action: Reality and Challenges* (2021); and the editor of *Forced Migration in Arab Countries*, published by the Arab Center (2023).

## Moderator

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**Aicha Elbasri**

Research Fellow at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, a lecturer at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, and a former United Nations staff. She held several media and communication positions at the UN Department of Information Affairs (2000-2005) in New York, the UN Development Programme in Sudan (2005-2009), and the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (2010-2012). Elbasri was the Spokeswoman for the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (2012-2013), then the Regional Communication and Media Advisor at the UN Population Fund for the Arab states, in Cairo (2013-2014). Between 1993 and 1998, she was a researcher at Le Centre de Recherche sur l'Imaginaire, at L'Université de Savoie, Chambéry, in France, where she earned her PhD in French Modern Literature. She has published several peer-reviewed research papers and is the author of: *L'Imaginaire carcéral de Jean Genet*, (L'Harmattan, 1999).

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