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**The Contributions of OIC to Conflict Resolution among the Fatah and Hamas in Palestine: An Investigation**

ABSTRACT

The OIC has played an influential role in the conflict resolution efforts among Fatah and Hamas in Palestine. In fact, OIC has expressed awareness of the Palestinian unity and worked to encourage both parties to enter dialogue and strengthen cooperation. The Organization also made full use of its diplomatic weight in order to raise awareness about the Palestinian issue and pressure the world to strive for a peaceful solution to this conflict. The organization has condemned the human rights violations against Palestinians by Israel and called for an end to the occupation of Palestinian territories. However, OIC has tremendous challenges that are needed to be tackled to resolve the conflict among different sects in Palestine. To achieve success the organization should bridge the gap between Fatah and Hamas, engage with external actors, and hold Israel accountable for its actions. The OIC should also find ways to promote dialogue and cooperation among Palestinians and work towards a just and lasting solution to the conflict. Hence, this study will present an overview of the contribution of the OIC to conflict resolution among Fatah and Hamas in Palestine and investigate the challenges OIC faces in this purpose. Finally, the paper tries to provide its probable solutions.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution, Hamas, Fatah, OIC, Contribution, Challenges, Solution

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Intra-conflicts are disputes within Muslim societies arising due to various reasons involving politics, economics, social issues, and religion. Conflicts have different forms: sectarian tensions, political disagreements, religious interpretations, ethnic and tribal disputes, social and economic inequality, radicalization, extremism, and migration. In addressing such conflicts, it is important to understand the specific context in which these conflicts take place and promote tolerance and social justice.

The Muslim community has faced intense scrutiny due to Shia-Sunni conflicts and the emergence of extremist groups like ISIS or Da’esh. The Hamas-Fatah conflict also presents a complex and long-standing issue with significant implications for both Palestinian and regional politics. Resolving this conflict is seen as crucial for advancing Palestinian national unity, effective governance, and progress toward a potential resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, achieving reconciliation remains a significant challenge due to the deeply entrenched divisions and differences in ideology and governance between the two factions.

Al-Ahsan (2017) argues that to counter international terrorism, there have been a host of global efforts, and, in this regard, OIC has gained increasing importance. He further says that OIC, as a multi-state organization with majority Muslim participant states, is crucial for settling intra-conflicts within Muslim societies. It strives for solidarity among Islamic nations and aims at consolidating their cooperation on various fronts as well as on issues pertaining to the Muslim world. In 2013, the OIC established the Peace, Security, and Mediation Unit to monitor current and potential crises, determine the root causes of such conflicts, and identify ways of resolving them. He further adds that to strengthen its role in mediation and preventive diplomacy, the OIC established the WPC for identifying mechanisms for conflict resolution and peace building. (Al-Ahsan, 2017; 194-5)

The OIC Wise Persons Council and Special Envoys of the Secretary-General met to operationalize the OIC mechanism for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in 2016. The meeting discussed various political and security challenges facing member states, conflict situations in Muslim minority areas, and challenges in preventive diplomacy, mediation, and conflict resolution. The joint meeting explored a series of steps to develop a roadmap for realizing the OIC vision of peace architecture through the promotion of dialogue, mediation, preventive diplomacy, and peacebuilding. The WPC will significantly contribute to strengthening the role of the Organization in fostering peace, security, stability and harmony in the Muslim world and beyond. (Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 2007).

Al Ahsan (2004; 137) states that the OIC exists to encourage collaboration among Muslim nations in economic, social, and cultural realms. However, its prime objective is to “foster Islamic solidarity among member states (Article II A-I),” making conflict resolution a critical task for the organization. He adds throughout its history, the OIC has faced numerous disputes between member states, such as those involving the PLO and Jordan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, Iran and Iraq, and Iraq and Kuwait. While the OIC has succeeded in bringing opposing parties together in some cases, it has fallen short of its goal in others.

# The OIC believes that regional and intergovernmental organizations are better equipped to resolve conflicts. The OIC’s conflict resolution efforts focus on Muslim-majority states and the self-determination struggles of Muslims worldwide. The OIC has played a significant role in mediating and resolving intra-state conflicts, having intervened in several conflicts involving Muslim communities in different countries. For instance, the OIC facilitated a peace agreement between the Moro National Liberation Front and the government in the Philippines in 1996, although its implementation has been challenging. In Thailand, the OIC helped mediate a resolution to the unrest and violence in the southern provinces in 2005-2007. In Somalia, the OIC supported peace efforts and established a humanitarian office to coordinate assistance in 2011. In Iraq, the OIC successfully achieved social peace through its intervention in the aftermath of the US-led war in 2003. (Shariqieh, 2012; 222-25)

# However, this paper delves into the internal conflicts that have arisen between Hamas and Fatah, analyzing the role that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has played in regulating conflict resolution among the two parties. It will be an attempt to present comprehensive insight into the intricacies that surround the situation, while underlining the importance of the OIC's intervention for promoting peaceful negotiations.

**II. LITERATURE REVIEWS**

The searched articles upon the topic of “the contributions of OIC to conflict resolution among the Fatah and Hamas in Palestine” revealed that there are no direct articles on this topic. However, there are some articles that discuss the Fatah-Hamas conflicts, which may provide useful insights.

These articles include “Civil War? The rift between Fatah and Hamas, as seen on social media” by Michael Barak, “Hamas-Fatah conflict: Shallow but Wide”, by Nathan J. Brown, “Hamas-PLO/Fatah Reconciliation and Rapprochement within the unfolding regional order in the Middle East since 2010: Neorealist and neoclassical realist perspectives” by Philipp O. Amour and “The Reconciliation of Hamas and Fatah Smoothing the Way to the Middle East Conference by Contributing to Peace and Security in the Region” by Margret Johannsen, et al. Additionally, there are some articles found on the OIC’s role in conflict resolution, such as “the OIC and conflict resolution: norms and practical challenges” by HirahAzhar, “Conflict among Muslim nations role of the OIC in conflict resolution” and “Conflict Resolution in Muslim Societies: Role of the OIC” by Abdullah Al Ahsan and “Emerging role of the organization of Islamic cooperation in the global governance since 1969” by Tajwar Ali et. al.  It’s worth noting that the articles didn’t address the OIC’s contribution to resolving the ongoing Hamas and Fatah conflicts. Nonetheless, the insights provided by these articles could be helpful in understanding the broader role of the OIC in conflict resolution, potentially indirectly aiding in the resolution of the Fatah-Hamas conflicts in Palestine.

Barak (2019) argued that the conflict between Fatah and Hamas has intensified due to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and Hamas’ declaration that the presidency is invalid. People in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are growing increasingly frustrated with the movements’ inability to achieve national unity, and there is a serious concern that the situation will escalate into a violent conflict. Online discussions reveal the deep divide in Palestinian society, and there is a strong sense of worry that this unrest will result in a civil war, which would ultimately benefit Israel.

According to Brown (2010), the conflict between Hamas and Fatah is rooted in religious and political differences, especially when it comes to the two-state solution and the appropriate forms of resistance. The lack of structures, leaders, and incentives to bridge the gap has made it hard to achieve unity. The conflict plays out on the streets of Gaza and the West Bank, where both sides impose their will whenever possible. The constitutional framework is broken, and legal instruments are used mainly to serve partisan interests. The leaders of both sides are deeply invested in the current division, and external forces structure incentives that perpetuate it. In the end, disputes about power and money cement the divisions and make unity difficult to achieve. (Brown, 2010; 35-39)

Amour’s (2018) article scrutinizes the impact of regional interactions and local preferences on the unification process between Fatah and Hamas since 2010. He highlights how regional changes have stifled Fatah’s and Hamas’s ability to negotiate national reconciliation and rapprochement within their respective movements, resulting in intra-state chaos in Palestine. The leadership’s pathologies explain why Fatah and Hamas have acted/reacted differently in various organizations, and the failure of previous reconciliation treaties illustrates how regional and domestic factors have combined to damage national unification. Amour suggests that domestic preferences (unit level) are essential in explaining the resilience of the division and rift between Fatah and Hamas. Therefore, he concludes that NCR (neoclassical realism) would be more effective in analyzing and explaining the Palestinian case due to its comprehensive approach to different levels of analysis. (Amour, 2018;621-31)

Johannsen et al. (2011) argued that the agreement to reconcile between Palestinian factions could be a significant turning point for the peace process in the Middle East. It is hoped that the formation of a technocrat government will lead to national reunification and pressure Israel to return to the negotiating table. Integrating Hamas as part of the Palestinian national representation is the only way to ensure the success of any future agreement. Supporters of the PA should refrain from imposing sanctions on it and instead consider it a functioning administrative body of a national entity. Finally, the Quartet should support Palestinian diplomatic initiatives, recognize a Palestinian state, and actively support the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian talks.(Johannsen et al., 2011; 7-8)

According to Al Ahsan’s (2004) analysis, the OIC was able to successfully resolve two conflicts, but failed to do so in the case of the Iran-Iraq conflict. Al Ahsan suggests that the reason for this inconsistency may be attributed to the personalities that played crucial roles within the organization. It was observed that in the two success stories, towering personalities of statesmen like Tengku Abdul Rahman, King Faisal, and Gamal Abdul Nasir came forward, and their towering leadership was one of the factors in successful conflict resolution. Such personalities were absent in the Iran-Iraq conflict, and the OIC failed to provide that type of leadership for its successful resolution. In addition, another critical failure on the part of the OIC regarding the Iran-Iraq War has been its resistance to insist upon the very Qur’anic principle it so insists on for other instances-the principle of investigating a wrong and punishing the criminals in light of a fear to trespass upon national sovereignty. This indeed cost the OIC their legitimacy before many Muslims' minds due to the OIC not insisting on certain principles that were considered among its ideals. In conclusion, the absence of strong leadership and the OIC’s hesitant approach to resolving the conflict contributed to its failure in the Iran-Iraq conflict, and highlighted the need for the organization to revisit its principles and decision-making processes.(Al Ahsan, 2004;137-157)

Al Ahsan (2017) has identified that the living conditions in the Muslim world are deteriorating due to corrupt governance, pseudo-religious practices, and general dissatisfaction among the people. Foreign intervention in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq has further deteriorated the situation, leading to the emergence of extremist groups and the spread of terrorism in areas that have been neglected. To combat these challenges, a better understanding of the Qur'an and the need to deal with political injustice, insecurity, and hopelessness among younger Muslims is essential. The OIC must take a lead in tackling both internal and external challenges and seek out the support of UN peacekeeping forces with active Muslim participation. Turkey and Malaysia are well positioned to assist the OIC in addressing issues of conflict resolution and security. (Al Ahsan, 2017;194-5)

Azhar discusses the inherently problematic relationship between conflict resolution and human rights at the OIC. The OIC has shifted towards humanitarianism and stronger multilateral cooperation, necessitating the adoption of universally acceptable international norms regarding conflict resolution and universal human rights language. However, the OIC’s lack of cohesion and control over member states has limited its adherence to international norms. The OIC’s conflict resolution approach is limited by its compromised role as a conflict resolution actor. The OIC has downsized its conflict resolution efforts and uses universal human rights language, indicating a reluctance to deviate from international human rights law. The OIC’s stance on human rights abuses within its member states is evolving, and its conflict resolution approach is open for discussion within the human rights discourse. (Azhar, 2019; 219-44)

According to Ali, while international organizations lack the power to enforce agreements and global laws within the international community, the OIC has demonstrated success in mediating conflicts and addressing issues that impact Muslims worldwide. The organization’s primary financial support comes from its specialized entities, including the Islamic Development Bank, which is dedicated to implementing various initiatives and strategies to aid underprivileged OIC states. While the OIC Standing Committees are responsible for executing resolutions passed by the Islamic Summits and the Council of Foreign Ministers, they do not possess the authority to enforce them. To fulfill their missions, OIC agencies work closely with UNO agencies, as well as other agencies and international organizations. (Ali, 2023; 16)

III. METHODOLOGY

The current study presents a comprehensive examination of the OIC’s role in resolving conflicts between Hamas and Fatah in Palestine. The primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with five experts in different fields, including political science (Respondent I & II), Islamic history and Culture (Respondent III), Islamic studies (Respondent IV) and economics (Respondent V). The researcher utilized an open-ended questionnaire to gain insights into the scholars’ observations, experiences, and knowledge regarding the OIC’s contribution to conflict resolution. The questions posed included inquiries into the importance of unity between Hamas and Fatah for the national interest of peace and security in Palestine, the potential for achieving solidarity between the two groups, and the challenges faced by the OIC in establishing unity and solidarity. To supplement the primary data, the researcher conducted library research and analyzed office documents from various sources. The study utilized a qualitative approach that employed a descriptive, critical and analytical method.

IV**. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HAMAS FATAH CONFLICT**

Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip in 2007, which sparked a conflict that is still ongoing. Following Hamas’ victory in the 2006 elections, tensions between the two parties grew as Hamas refused to commit to nonviolence and recognition of Israel. As a result, Israel, the Middle East Quartet, several Western states, and Arab states imposed sanctions. Abbas deemed the creation of Hamas’ security service unconstitutional. In 2006, the Hamas and Fatah failed to establish power-sharing, resulting in international sanctions. Ismail Haniyeh was denied entry into Gaza, and Hamas militants became enraged, storming the post and taking over the hall after guards fired at them. This incident occurred amidst mounting tensions between them, following the death of three sons of a Fatah security chief. (Fatah–Hamas conflict”, 2021).

Haniyeh returned to Gaza in December 2006 without any money, but armed men attacked his car. The assassination attempt was blamed on Fatah. Palestinian National Security Forces fired upon a Hamas rally, leading to clashes and at least 20 injuries. Abbas called for new elections, but Hamas disputed their legitimacy, sparking gunfights which resulted in 33 deaths. The political turmoil continued throughout 2007. A peace agreement was signed in February but was unsuccessful in curbing the violence, which resulted in over 50 deaths. Between June 10 and 15, 2007, Hamas took control of the main and coastal roads in Gaza, causing over 118 deaths and 550 injuries. In response, President Abbas declared a state of emergency and dismissed Prime Minister Haniya, leading to the appointment of Salam Fayyad as PM. The international community recognized the new administration, and the US ended its boycott of the PA. (Fatah–Hamas conflict”, 2021).

#### Violence broke out between Hamas and Fatah in Gaza, leading to retaliatory attacks in the West Bank. Fatah militants targeted Hamas institutions, while Hamas warned of Fatah’s downfall in the West Bank. In 2009, Hamas violence during the Israel-Gaza conflict caused at least 32 deaths.Between October 2007 and January 2008, tensions between Hamas security forces and the Heles clan in eastern Gaza escalated, resulting in multiple deaths and injuries. Hamas and Islamic Jihad exchanged fire, resulting in seven deaths. Fatah organized the largest demonstration in Gaza, but Hamas gunmen forcibly dispersed it, killing six civilians and injuring over 80.Tensions between them escalated after the 2011 Egyptian Revolution and Morsi’s deposition in 2013. The US-backed El-Sisi regime plans to close the Rafah border crossing until PA forces regain control. Hamas accused PA leadership of enforcing Gaza blockade. In 2014, Hamas allegedly plotted to depose Fatah in the West Bank, arresting over 90 people. (Fatah–Hamas conflict”, 2021).

The PLC had originally scheduled elections for May 22, 2021, as per Abbas’s directive on January 15, 2021. However, on April 29, 2021, the elections were postponed due to challenging circumstances. Abbas cited the need to ensure participation from Jerusalem and its people as the reason for the delay, while Hamas refused to attend the meeting and rejected the idea of postponing the elections. There are concerns thatFatah could attempt to delay or cancel the elections, a move that Hamas opposes. Hamas has also boycotted the 2021-2022 local elections, arguing that Israeli permission is not required for voting in East Jerusalem. (Fatah–Hamas conflict”, 2021).

**IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF UNITY BETWEEN HAMAS AND FATAH**

After conducting thorough research, it is evident that the overwhelming consensus among respondents is that for Palestine to achieve lasting peace and security, Hamas and Fatah must unite. While acknowledging that this may be a difficult task, a united front would grant greater bargaining power, streamline negotiations with Israel, and bolster international recognition. By presenting a collective stance, they can more effectively participate in diplomatic efforts and demonstrate their commitment to a two-state solution. This unity would invigorate the fledgling Middle East peace process and give the Palestinian government a stronger position from which to consolidate power and quell internal divides. It is crucial to note that a unity government of Hamas and Fatah has the potential to represent all Palestinians, prompting Israel and the USA to make greater efforts in the negotiation process. On the other hand, division weakens their position and slows down progress towards stability. Reconciliation would strengthen not only their prospects for self-determination but also give them a more cohesive base on which to tackle the wider issues of conflict and occupation that face the region. Ultimately, unity is one step toward a peaceful and secure future for Palestine.

V. THE VARIOUS ATTEMPTS OF OIC IN RECONCILIATION BETWEEN HAMAS FATAH CONFLICTS

There is a sincere process under way called the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation process for addressing and easing the longstanding enmity between them. The roots of the dispute go back to the Fatah-Hamas conflict in 2006-2007 and the subsequent takeover of Hamas over the Gaza Strip. Reconciliation will bring harmony, peace, and stability to the area by resolving the conflict and restoring at least a semblance of normalcy. The OIC has always supported such attempts at reconciliation, although they seem to be less directly involved this time around. It remains committed to peace and harmony, and extends its services towards any venture that may lead to the creation of positivity and understanding between people of different backgrounds.

# *OIC Secretary General-Sponsored Three-Point Agreement*

### The OIC General Secretary, Ihsanoglu, has expressed his fear about the aggressive actions in the Gaza Strip on December 05, 2006. He has recommended the Palestinians not to connect in domestic clash and has asked all groups to implement inter-discipline. He has called for immediate efforts to de-escalate the situation and prevent further violence. Additionally, he has encouraged the resumption of national dialogue to establish a unity government. Ihsanoglu has even offered to travel to Palestine to help achieve national unity. (United Nations, 2006, December 15).

# On December 19, 2006, there was a meeting in Gaza sponsored by the OIC between Hamas and Fatah leaders. Ihsanoglo urgently joined the meeting. During the meeting, three points of agreement were reached between the two factions (Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 2007). The first point was to achieve comprehensive calm in the Palestinian territories by withdrawing all weapons and ending all marches. The second point was to establish an independent judicial committee composed of five judges, with one judge appointed by each of Hamas and Fatah, and three judges appointed by the OIC, to investigate past incidents. The third point was to resume national dialogue between Hamas and Fatah, without any preconditions. Abbas and Haniyeh both agreed that the OIC should play a crucial role in implementing this agreement and achieving these objectives mentioned. It was hoped that this agreement would bring an end to the brutal conflict and resultant loss of life suffered by these two parties.

### *February 2007 Mecca Agreement and the Role of OIC*

In 2007, Fatah and Hamas signed the Mecca Agreement with the aim of ending military clashes and establishing a national unity government (Intisar, et., al, 2011; 46). The 2007 annual coordination meetingof the OIC celebrated the Mecca Agreement on Palestinian National Reconciliation, a significant agreement resulting from extensive negotiations between Member States and the OIC Secretary-General. The primary goal was to restore the Gaza Strip to its pre-June 2007 state, preserving the unity of the Palestinian people and land. The meeting emphasized the importance of national dialogue among Palestinians for reconciliation and harmony. It expressed unwavering support for the PLO and democratically-elected Palestinian institutions, pledged to continue supporting the PLO and the Palestinian people in their struggle for rights such as self-determination, freedom, and independence. (Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 2007).

### *After Sana’a Declaration (2008), the Role of Abdoulaye Wade*

# In March 2008, Hamas and Fatah signed the Sana’a Declaration, calling for Gaza’s return to pre-June 2007 conditions but Cairo reconciliation talks were postponed. ([Sudam](https://www.reuters.com/journalists/mohamed-sudam), 2008).

After Sana’s Declaration, in 2009, Abdoulaye Wade, acting as a representative of OIC high officials, engaged in multiple meetings with Hamas-Fatah leaders. With the belief that a unified stance from the Palestinians is the key to achieving peace, Wade continues to plan for further meetings and dialogue in order to mediate the conflicts between them and establish a strong sense of unity. Given the enormity of challenges associated with this mediation, Wade has also been engaging with regional leaders to help stabilize the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the aftermath of the fighting in Gaza. (Skepticism Surrounds Senegalese …, 2009) .

### *May 2011 Cairo Agreement is the Great Achievement of OIC*

Back in 2011, the PA and Hamas reached an agreement to establish a joint caretaker government, with the aim of holding elections in 2012. As part of the agreement, a transitional government of technocrats was set up, and Hamas was permitted to join the PLO, with elections to its PNC also on the horizon. Unfortunately, Israel responded to this development by withholding PA taxes in a punitive measure. Negotiations for a unity government were subsequently put on hold due to disagreements over PM Salam Fayyad, as well as Israel’s position on the peace process. In light of these challenges, Abbas opted to prioritize the UN’s recognition of Palestinian statehood rather than pursuing a unity government. ([Bronner](https://www.nytimes.com/by/ethan-bronner), 2011).

The Cairo agreement, signed by Fatah and Hamas, is a significant achievement for the OIC. Ihsanoglu congratulated the Palestinian people and emphasized the need for Palestinian reconciliation to overcome challenges and restore their rights, ultimately leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. (United Nations, 2011).

### *Support of OIC on February 2012 Doha Agreement*

The Doha deal, signed by Abbas and KhaledMashal in February 2012, was seen as a step forward in the Palestinian reconciliation agreement. Ihsanoglu, has praised the Doha Declaration on Palestinian national reconciliation signed by Fatah-Hamas. He hopes the agreement will lead to a national unity government and fulfill the aspirations of the Palestinian people. Ihsanoglu commended Qatar and Egypt for their support and praised the State of Qatar for its role in promoting Palestinian reconciliation (United Nations, 2012). However, reconciliation implementation stalled, with no progress on joint elections and Fatah accusing Hamas of arresting dozens of Fatah members. (“Fatah–Hamas Doha Agreement” , 2012, February 07).

### *After 2014 Gaza and Cairo Agreements*

In April 2014, Fatah and Hamas signed a reconciliation agreement, aiming for a unity government within five weeks. Abbas swore in a new technocratic government, led by Rami Hamdallah. After a series of Israeli raids in the West Bank and attacks on Gaza, the parties signed an additional agreement in Cairo, specifying the new government’s tasks and responsibilities. (Beaumont, & Lewis, 2014).

The resolution (2015) by the OIC regarding Palestine emphasizes the importance of Palestinian unity and representation within the framework of the PLO. The OIC praises the efforts of Abbas in achieving national reconciliation and stresses the need to respect the legitimate institutions of the State of Palestine. The formation of the PNUG is also welcomed and fully supported by the OIC, as it represents the culmination of reconciliation efforts sponsored by Egypt. The OIC Secretary-General EyadMadani, has hailed this step as a victory for the will of the Palestinians and calls upon the international community to support the national unity government to ensure its success and the protection of the rights and interests of the Palestinian people. (Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 2015, May 27-28).

***Jakart Declaration of OIC (2016) for Palestinian Unity***

A key principle highlighted in the Jakarta Declaration of OIC (2016) is the need to foster unity among Palestinians by resolving the ongoing conflicts between Hamas and Fatah. At the summit, urgent issues to be addressed include garnering international support for renewed negotiations that prioritize Palestinian rights and establish a timeline for ending the occupation. Additionally, efforts towards the formation of a Palestinian national unity government must be supported to effectively address the needs of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian National Unity Government (PNUG), under the leadership of the Palestinian President, is fully endorsed as a significant milestone in implementing the Cairo and Makkah agreements and the Doha Declaration, which were all aimed at reconciling the Fatah-Hamas conflict. (Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), 2016, March 07).

Indonesian president Kalla is set to play a key role in promoting unity between the Hamas-Fatah leaders of at the 5th OIC Summit. His goal is to pave the way for Palestinian independence. Kalla believes that if the Hamas and Fatah continue to argue and remain in conflict, it will be challenging for Islamic countries to support their cause as he says, “How can they solve their own problems if they are still separated and involved in conflict?” (Sulawesi, 2016).

JusufKalla, (2016) has expressed his disappointment in the OIC for not effectively addressing conflicts within the Muslim world. Kalla has raised concerns about the organization’s ability to achieve unity and solidarity for justice and peace when Muslims are fighting against each other. He has also voiced his concern over the slow response of the Muslim world in helping to resolve the Palestinian issue, emphasizing that Palestinian unity is crucial for finding a resolution. (Anjaiah, 2016).

The OIC has taken an important stride in conflict resolution between Muslim states. The first consultative session of the OIC Wise Persons Council and Special Envoys of the Secretary General was held on 17-18 May 2016 with the participation of former Presidents of Turkey, Indonesia and Nigeria as well as other officials. The initiative is in line with the OIC Charter, which seeks to entrench justice, mutual respect, and good neighborliness amongst member states. The joint meeting was scheduled to take up political and security challenges, humanitarian issues, combat against Islamophobia, and the promotion of inter-cultural harmony. WPC plays a consultative and mediatory role through its involvement in preventive diplomacy to assist the peace initiatives by OIC. WPC members will use their good offices in the exercise of preventive diplomacy to support dialogue, mediation, and negotiation by parties in conflict. (Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), 2016, May 18).

# *13th OIC Summit calls for unity (2016)*

### From April 14-15, 2016, the 13th summit of the OIC was held in Istanbul, Turkey. The theme of the summit was “Unity and Solidarity for Justice and Peace,” with the aim of supporting the Palestinian people’s struggle and establishing their sovereign state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. During the summit, President Erdogan emphasized the need for Muslim unity despite differences, stating that the Muslim world must develop a common denominator of issues over which no Muslim country will differ. The OIC secretary highlighted the importance of unity in resolving conflicts between Hamas and Fatah, as well as furthering the Palestinian cause. (Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), 2016).

### *2022 Algeria Declaration for Hamas Fatah Reconciliation*

In 2022, a significant Palestinian reconciliation agreement was signed by 14 Palestinian factions, bringing together Hamas and Fatah. The agreement reaffirms the PLO’s role as the representative of the Palestinian people and promotes national dialogue that integrates all factions. Within a year, presidential and parliamentary elections for the Palestinian National Council and Authority are set to take place. The reconciliation process will be overseen by an Arab team. The meeting between Hamas and Fatah, was hosted by Algerian President AbdelmadjidTebboune. The OIC Secretary-General expressed strong support for the meeting and expressed hope for its success. Algeria has been working to facilitate talks between Hamas and Fatah since 2007. (OIC hails meeting between Hamas, Fatah …, 2022)

## *****Latest Developments*****

# The Executive Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in its extraordinary, open-ended meeting, held on Wednesday, 24th May 2023, at the headquarters of the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah, KSA,on May 24, 2023 but unfortunately, they have not addressed Hamas Fatah reconciliation.

## Abbas met with Hamas leaders in Egypt on July, 31, 2023, but the meeting was unsuccessful in producing a unification deal. A “reconciliation committee” was formed, and further dialogue promised. The process plays well for the Palestinian people who desire unified leadership Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), 2023). According to Palestinian political experts, despite recent meetings in Turkey and Egypt, neither Hamas nor Fatah seem ready to make reconciliation efforts successful (Ibrahim, 2023).

### On September 19, 2023, the OIC Secretary-General issued a call for a renewed peace process, to be facilitated by multilateral international sponsorship in accordance with relevant international legitimacy resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, and with a specific timetable in place. (Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), 2023).

### The successful establishment of the Arab Peace would pave the way for much-needed Hamas Fatah reconciliation, which has been hindered by regional unrest and a multitude of conflicting influences.

***Is the OIC’s Role in Conflict Resolution Enough?***

All respondents argued that the OIC’s role is not sufficient in establishing unity and solidarity between Hamas and Fatah. Its reaction has always been limited to merely giving statements. For instance, Ihsanoglu, welcomed the signing, under the sponsorship of Egypt, of the national reconciliation agreement between them as his statement was nothing but the expression of his congratulations to the Palestinian people on that achievement although he had reaffirmed in the same statement the OIC’s continued readiness to contribute to any steps likely to consolidate the Palestinian national unity. His statement added that the Palestinian reconciliation constituted a pressing need for the preservation of the Palestinian people’s unity in the face of the challenges, for the recovery of the legitimate Palestinian people’s rights, and for the establishment of the Independent Palestinian State with its capital Al-Quds Al-sharif, as he mentioned.

Respondent II argued that the OIC cannotplay the prime role but it can play a supportive role in fostering unity between Hamas and Fatah, given its influence within the Muslim world and its potential to facilitate diplomatic efforts. However, the OIC’s role alone might not be sufficient. Reconciliation between the two Palestinian factions requires comprehensive efforts involving direct negotiations, addressing core grievances, and finding common ground on critical issues.

# VI. CHALLENGES OF OIC IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION BETWEEN HAMAS AND FATAH

According to all participants in the study, the OIC encounters numerous obstacles when attempting to resolve conflicts between Hamas and Fatah. These two Palestinian political and militant groups have a long history of rivalry and conflict. The challenges that the OIC faces in this regard include:

***Deep-seated Historical Divisions***

The divisions between Hamas and Fatah, according to all respondents, are multi-dimensional and pose serious challenges to the OIC's efforts for conflict resolution between these two Palestinian factions. They add that Hamas and Fatah have different visions for the future of a Palestinian state, with Hamas having a more Islamist orientation and Fatah being more secular. Historical conflicts like the 2007 Gaza conflict and the 2014 Cairo Agreement have also contributed to the divide. The two factions have different leaders, and their leadership styles are also divergent, while the control of territory is also a factor, with Hamas in control of the Gaza Strip and Fatah controlling the West Bank. They further contended that the difference in strategies toward the achievement of Palestinian independence has also contributed to the divide, with Hamas believing in armed resistance and Fatah in diplomacy and negotiation. Added to that are public perceptions within Palestine and also internationally, which also hinder finding common ground. The final factor is a deficit in trust between the factions that has built up over the years from conflict and broken agreements.

***Lack of Strong Political Will of OIC Member States***

Respondent I, II & III argued that "lack of political will" from the member states of the OIC to solve the Fatah-Hamas conflict is one of the most critical barriers to stability in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and to its prospects of peace. They also said, “Diversity of the Member States of the OIC, geopolitical considerations, conflicting ways of resolving the conflict, greater regional dynamics, as well as limited influence make consensus on this issue difficult”.

***Regional and Geopolitical Influences***

The OIC's task of reconciling Hamas and Fatah is not an easy one, as it has to deal with very complex regional influences. Indeed, regional players like Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt have supported and sponsored either Hamas or Fatah throughout their history, further complicating reconciliation processes. Also, regional alliances and rivalries-Iran’s alignment with Hamas, for example, and Egypt’s with Fatah-and the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia for influence in the Middle East can complicate conflict resolution processes. Regional actors interfere in internal Palestinian affairs, control border crossings and access routes, and create dependencies by financial support, all elements that can further complicate conflict resolution processes. Last but not least, regional developments, such as the Abraham Accords, can influence Palestinian politics and the strategies and positions of Hamas and Fatah.

***International Influence***

All interviewees emphasized that the OIC encounters certain difficulties to create a peaceful solution to the conflict between Hamas and Fatah because of different international players' participation in this conflict. According to them, great Powers like the US, the EU, and even Russia have certain strategic interests in the Middle East which have an implication for the interaction between Hamas and Fatah. At times acting as mediator for Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, international bodies such as the United Nations and the Quartet can have a direct consequence on the negotiations between Hamas and Fatah by placing pressure on both sides through international organizations and countries supplying important humanitarian and financial assistance in the Palestinian territories. Thereafter, international actors have developed pressures based on the behavior and policy orientations chosen by both Hamas and Fatah. Other international issues that may affect the Palestinian political landscape include the recognition of Palestinian statehood and diplomatic recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer state at the UN. International actors also have regional alliances and interests influencing their positions on the Palestinian factions. Bilateral relations of individual countries with Israel or the Palestinian Authority can influence the overall peace process and the prospects for reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah.

***Lack of Enforcement Mechanism***

According to viewpoint of all respondents, the lack of enforcement mechanisms in the OIC poses challenges to conflict resolution efforts between Hamas and Fatah. Consequently, the OIC’s ability to ensure compliance with any agreements or resolutions reached may be limited. This absence of enforcement can lead to a range of issues, including a lack of accountability, fewer incentives for cooperation, a higher risk of conflicts re-escalating, and weakened leverage in mediation efforts. Additionally, the OIC’s limited enforcement capacity may hinder third-party guarantees and oversight.

***Limited Financial Resources***

According to arguments of respondent II, III & IV, the OIC confronts formidable obstacles in its quest to bring an end to the continuing strife between Hamas and Fatah, primarily due to financial constraints. According to them, the OIC may face difficulties in carrying out extensive diplomatic and mediation initiatives, providing humanitarian aid and assistance to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, investing in economic development and infrastructure programs, and pursuing public diplomacy objectives owing to budgetary limitations. Moreover, arranging meetings, workshops, and conferences related to conflict resolution may involve logistical costs, further complicating efforts to achieve successful conflict resolution.

**VII. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND SOLUTIONS**

To achieve Palestinian unity and political stability, the OIC should adopt the several policy recommendations and solutions suggested by this study.

***Qur’anic Solution***

The reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas is a sensitive and complex issue that needs to be handled with utmost care. Therefore, the OIC should take the lead in resolving them in accordance with the guidance provided by the Holy Quran. It is time for the OIC to convince both parties that the Qur'anic approach to conflict resolution will work effectively.

The Quran has some useful teachings to reconcile and unify Muslims, which would be helpful in this case for Fatah-Hamas. According to Surah Al-Hujurat verse 49:9, there is an encouragement for reconciliation whenever conflicts arise among Muslims. In the Quran, unity and brotherhood among Muslims are emphasized in Surah Al-Imran, verse 3:103, while in Surah Ash-Shura, verse 42:38, the concept of Shura or consultation is encouraged. Forgiveness and mercy are also presented as virtues in Surah An-Nur (24:22), while disputes are to be resolved with justice and fairness in Surah An-Nisa (4:58). Applying these Quranic principles to the reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, both parties should give priority to peaceful negotiations and the welfare of the Palestinian people to work towards a just and equitable solution. Also, this is the time when consulting religious scholars and leaders can help them through Quranic principles of guidance. Ultimately, sincerity on both sides, compromising, and a commitment to reconciliation and peace will be called for.

***Forming a Specialized Higher Committee for Reconciliation***

The respondents have recommended that a higher committee, solely for this purpose, be formed within the OIC to achieve peace between Fatah and Hamas. The committee shall work solely on this issue, providing neutral mediation, managing the efforts, expertise related to conflict resolution, and resources, which are essentially required. However, the result of this recommendation depends upon the seriousness and commitment of the OIC member states, cooperation from Fatah and Hamas, support from the international community, and transparency and accountability in the working of the committee.

***Fund Raising***

All respondents felt this that formation of a solid financial fund on the basis of OIC would mark the main step towards stability and reconciliation for Palestine. The OIC should work in cohesion with its member states to build up a strong fund that may give a boost to the development of the economy, humanitarian aids, comprehensive research studies, and management performance of Palestinian institutions. The fund can also be used to promote reconciliation initiatives, such as funding dialogues, joint projects, and confidence-building measures that bring people together. At the same time, it is important to ensure transparency, accountability, and neutrality through continued commitment and coordination with external actors.

***Alternative Initiatives to Tackle Fund Crisis***

Respondent I, II & IV believed that to bring unity among the Palestinians and regional stability in the Middle East, OIC should work closely with member states and external donors to attract additional funding from other sources for conflict resolution efforts. They further commented that OIC should focus on effective but low-cost initiatives, such as virtual diplomacy or remote outreach efforts, to achieve greater efficiency. Despite financial constraints, the OIC can, through the adoption of creative approaches, partnering, and strategic prioritization, be able to contribute its quota to peace and stability within the region.

***Enhancing the Capacity Building of the Secretary General’s Office.***

Respondent I & II recommended that in order to effectively improve conflict resolution capacity, a well-funded, adequately staffed, and trained mediation unit should be established within the OIC Secretary General. They added that in order to improve in this area, a number of measures should be implemented by the Secretary General of the OIC, including specialized conflict resolution training for staff; strengthening research and analysis capabilities; establishing relationships with other organizations; implementing ongoing conflict analysis and early warning systems; training staff in cross-cultural communication and mediation/facilitation skills; and implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of conflict resolution initiatives. The Secretary’s Office could bring significant benefits in the resolution of the Hamas-Fatah conflict by creating an internal protocol that includes clearly defined roles, conflict analysis, mediation and facilitation, monitoring and reporting, and coordination with other relevant parties. It has to be part of a comprehensive approach involving diplomatic engagement with the parties in conflict and other international actors for lasting peace and reconciliation of the Palestinian people.

***Engaging with Influential Local Leaders***

The respondents I, III & IV said that the research focused on the possible benefits of engaging with influential local leaders in order to find a solution to the Hamas-Fatah conflict in the Palestinian territories. They claimed that the local leaders are more aware of the internal dynamics within their respective communities and can thus facilitate dispute resolution, reconciliation, and confidence-building among the parties. By involving them in peace efforts, the reconciliation process gains credibility, and they can facilitate negotiations between factions, prevent conflicts from escalating, and help reintegrate former combatants into civilian life. They further said that community-based conflict resolution initiatives, which develop localized and context-specific solutions, can address the unique challenges and grievances faced by different communities in the territories. Engagement will also need to be broadly inclusive, involving local leaders of all backgrounds representative of the breadth of community views, including women, youth, religious leaders, tribal figures, public opinion writers, academics, and civil society representatives.

***Restoration Enforcement Mechanism***

Respondent I & IV strongly suggested that giving the OIC an enforcement mechanism would go a long way in providing the organization with credibility to prevent violations of agreements besides helping manage conflicts through mediation and facilitation between Hamas and Fatah. A few, however, disagreed, suggesting that this might be too tall an order for the OIC to achieve despite being highly desirable. Ultimately, restoring such a mechanism will require careful diplomacy and the cooperation of all relevant parties.

***Regional and Geopolitical Conesus***

All the respondents shared the opinion that reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah is a very complex task due to the intricate web of interests and relationships between regional and geopolitical actors. It is recommended that any diplomatic initiative or negotiation should be done with the interests and concerns of these actors in mind, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran, and Jordan. In order to maintain consensus at a high level, aligning strategies and further utilizing a set of diversified instruments is crucial, including: diplomacy, mediation, conflict prevention, humanitarian assistance, mobilization of resources, promotion of two states living side by side, respect for international law, joint statements and declarations, promotion of Track II, public diplomacy, establishment of analysis and early warning capacity regarding conflicts, and encouragement of neutral mediators being appointed.

***International Consensus***

In Respondent II, III & IV's strong agreement, it would be imperative for the OIC to create a consensus among international actors if peace is to be successful regarding the Hamas-Fatah conflict and provide some sense of peaceful resolution between Israel and Palestine. A united front among international partners can enhance conflict resolution efforts toward better effectiveness in results. The OIC, on the other hand, should be more active in diplomatic efforts to develop consensus among special major actors involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, such as the UN, and other influential international organizations. They also added the need to work with international partners towards the development of joint statements, resolutions, or declarations that present a unified stance on the imperative of Hamas-Fatah reconciliation and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

**VIII. CONCLUSION**

These intra-conflicts in Muslim societies emerge based on political, economic, and social issues, besides religious. The sectarian tensions, as well as political disagreements at large, further manifest in extremist groups too. The OIC plays an immensely important role in resolving intra-conflicts within Muslim societies through cooperative engagement and addressing issues affecting the Muslim world. The OIC has faced a number of disputes between its member states, yet it has mediated and resolved many intra-state conflicts in countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, Somalia, and Iraq. Indeed, the OIC is committed to promoting dialogue, mediation, preventive diplomacy, and peacemaking to nurture peace, security, stability, and harmony within the Muslim world and beyond.

Unity and solidarity between Hamas and Fatah are very difficult to achieve given the historical differences, ideologies, and power dynamics. For unity to be achieved, both parties must put the goal of Palestinian self-determination first, compromise on key issues, and establish a transparent power-sharing mechanism.

The OIC has been very active in seeking reconciliation of the Hamas-Fatah Conflict since 2006. The need for unity and harmony among Palestinians was echoed at different summits of the OIC. The OIC has never encouraged or contributed to the escalation of the conflict between Hamas and Fatah nor did it ever try to divide the Palestinian groups. From the outset, the OIC treated Hamas and Fatah as important and legitimate forces inside Palestine and respected their commitment to resisting Israel. It needs to be underlined that the OIC has taken effective steps for preventing Hamas and Fatah from bloodbath and violence against one another. This is really a brilliant example of steadfast commitment towards maintaining peace and tranquility within their part of the globe. The respondents have argued that the role of the OIC for unity and solidarity between Hamas and Fatah is inadequate; the reaction was confined to making statements only. While the OIC can play a supporting role in unity given its influence within the Muslim world, comprehensive efforts given direct negotiations, core grievance addresses, and finding commonality on critical issues are required. Yet again, a propitious environment for long-term unity and solidarity could only be provided by the parties themselves, Hamas and Fatah, and through general international involvement. Considering the organizational limitations of the OIC, the task of reconciling Hamas and Fatah is a challenging one to handle.

The competition and strife between the two fractions highlight that several difficult questions regarding ideology, historical conflicts, leadership feud, territorial control, differential approaches, public perception, and trust deficit are involved in a broader process of conflict resolution. It is compounded by the lack of political will among the OIC member states to resolve the conflict. The need to address these challenges for a lasting peace in the region. More regional and international influences complicate OIC's efforts, including support from different countries and organizations. Lack of enforcement mechanisms and very limited financial resources for diplomatic and mediation initiatives, humanitarian aid, economic development, and public diplomacy objectives: these factors inhibit the processes of conflict resolution, which make the enforcement of any agreements or resolutions difficult to accomplish. In order to minimize the conflict between Hamas and Fatah, OIC organs and committees should support the Palestinian people in exercising their right to sovereignty over East Jerusalem, in conformity with the relevant UN resolutions, through collective efforts. The support of the OIC would strengthen the end of the Israeli occupation and allow the Palestinian people to enjoy their legitimate rights. Regional and international actors can offer incentives for cooperation and provide a conducive environment for negotiations. Clear and tangible benefits for both parties should be outlined, such as improved governance, increased aid, and enhanced diplomatic recognition. The dream of a sovereign Palestinian state and the realization of the benefits of unity may well be what motivates Hamas and Fatah to bury their differences. Patience, inclusive dialogue, and international support remain essential in cultivating an environment that would allow such unity to become a reality.

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