

HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION IN THE GAZA CONFLICT: A UNITED NATIONS (UN) PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This article examines the challenges faced by the United Nations (UN) in addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza through the lens of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. Focusing on three major escalations - Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), Operation Protective Edge (2014), and the May 2021 conflict the study uses a qualitative case study approach and thematic analysis of UN reports and secondary sources to assess the effectiveness of the UN's interventions. The findings reveal that political divisions within the UN Security Council, particularly the use of veto power, chronic funding shortages, and operational constraints such as the Israeli blockade, have significantly limited the UN's ability to prevent mass atrocities and protect civilians. Despite its crucial role in ceasefire mediation and aid delivery, the UN's response remains reactive and hindered by structural barriers. The article concludes by recommending reforms to limit the Security Council's veto in cases of mass atrocities, strengthen sustainable funding for key UN agencies, and enhance accountability through closer collaboration with the International Criminal Court (ICC). Addressing these systemic challenges is vital for the UN to respond more effectively to protracted humanitarian crises like Gaza and to uphold its global protection mandate.

Keywords: *United Nations, Human Interventions, Political Conflict, Palestine, Israel*

1.0 Introduction

The Gaza conflict best exemplifies the constraints of contemporary humanitarian intervention, a continuous confrontation between Israeli and Palestinian factions. Under the tenets of international law, human rights, and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) philosophy, the UN has been in charge of addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza for many years. The UN's dedication to reducing civilian suffering via advocacy, humanitarian efforts, and conflict resolution programs lies at the heart of these activities.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which was founded in 1949 and is still providing vital services including food assistance, healthcare, and education, is one example of the UN's historical presence in Gaza. Not with standing these efforts, the UN has faced many difficulties in its position, such as political disagreements within the Security Council and blockade-imposed practical limitations.

The article intends to examine the UN's diverse role in alleviating Gaza's ongoing humanitarian crises. This study attempts to provide a thorough grasp of the advantages and disadvantages of the UN's interventions by examining the fundamentals of international law, the implementation of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), and the conflict's historical development. It also emphasises how urgently institutional changes are required to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian efforts in Gaza and other crisis areas across the world.

1.1 Background Study

When Israel was established in 1948, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced to flee their homes in what is known as the Nakba, or "catastrophe." This is where the origins of the Gaza conflict lie. Decades of tension and conflict were sparked by this displacement. The struggle grew more intense as a result of later incidents like the 1967 Six-Day War, in which Israel captured Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. The Second Intifada (2000-2005) saw increased violence and militarisation after the First Intifada (1987-1993), which saw extensive Palestinian protests against Israeli occupation.

When Hamas won the Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006, the political landscape underwent a dramatic change, resulting in a split between Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza. Attempts to create a single Palestinian state have been hampered by this split, which has also prolonged internal political instability. Israel and Egypt have enforced harsh blockades on Gaza, which is governed by Hamas. These restrictions have limited the flow of people and products, resulting in an economic and humanitarian disaster.

There has been a mixed reaction to these changes on a global scale. The UN has often demanded that international humanitarian law be followed, but political differences within the Security Council have frequently hampered its efforts. The activities of regional actors, including Egypt, Jordan, and Qatar, have varied; they have occasionally mediated ceasefires or offered aid, but their actions are frequently driven by their geopolitical objectives.

Recurrent violence over the decades has destroyed Gaza's infrastructure, displaced thousands, and caused tremendous suffering for civilians, most notably during severe escalations in 2008-2009, 2014, and 2021. International regulations and the absence of a unified worldwide approach have made the situation worse. The intricate relationship between political differences, historical grievances, and humanitarian needs emphasises how urgent it is to launch a thorough and ongoing intervention.

1.2 Research Objective

The purpose of this study is to assess how the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) theory has been applied by the UN in relation to the Gaza crisis. The study illuminates the achievements and constraints of the United Nations attempts to avoid mass atrocities and safeguard civilian populations. Analysing the humanitarian effects of significant escalations in Gaza, such as those that took place in 2008-2009, 2014, and 2021 and resulted in extensive destruction and suffering for civilians, is another crucial goal. Finding weaknesses in the current response mechanisms requires an understanding of these effects.

Additionally, this study aims to suggest practical changes that will improve the UN's ability to address the conflict's root causes as well as its immediate humanitarian needs. The goals of these suggestions are to increase accountability for transgressions of international law, enhance cooperation amongst international parties, and fortify the UN's ability to resolve conflicts. By achieving these goals, the study adds to a larger conversation on the function of international organisations in handling protracted hostilities and resolving humanitarian emergencies.

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite ongoing international attention, both local government and global systems have failed to sufficiently safeguard Gazan people from mass atrocities and repeating humanitarian crises (Human Rights

Watch, 2019; UN OCHA, 2022). The Gaza conflict stems from decades of political, institutional, and security issues that have subjected residents to bloodshed, blockades, and human rights violations.

Since the 1948 Nakba, repeated escalations, such as the Second Intifada (2000-2005) and Hamas' ascent in 2007, have worsened internal tensions and prolonged instability [15]. Since 2007, Israel and Egypt have established a blockade that severely restricts the passage of people and products, resulting in chronic shortages of food, medical supplies, and key services.

Internationally, the UN Security Council's political deadlock, particularly the use of veto power by permanent members, has hampered decisive action [11]. Simultaneously, vital agencies like UNRWA are chronically underfunded, significantly limiting their operational capacity to provide humanitarian help [19]. As a result, Gaza's civilian population remains very vulnerable, with repeated cycles of conflict resulting in widespread deaths and loss of critical infrastructure [9].

This ongoing failure exposes a systemic flaw in the global humanitarian protection mechanism, raising serious concerns about the efficiency of the UN's Responsibility to Protect (R2P) philosophy in long-running wars. Addressing this issue is critical to enhancing humanitarian intervention frameworks and protecting civilian populations in Gaza and other conflict-affected areas.

2.0 Literature Review

Humanitarian intervention is firmly grounded in international legal concepts like state sovereignty, human rights, and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. Since its adoption at the 2005 UN World Summit [20], R2P has acted as a framework for the international community to prevent mass atrocities such as war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. Its application, however, remains hotly debated in situations when geopolitical rivalry and entrenched interests trump humanitarian imperatives [11]. In Gaza, the UN's engagement has been characterised by a complex interplay of legal, political, and practical limitations. According to research, while the UN has contributed to ceasefire mediation, relief delivery, and international advocacy, its activities are frequently hindered by political differences within the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the selective application of international rules [5]. For example, permanent members, particularly the United States, have often used their veto authority to reject resolutions that would hold parties accountable for human rights violations [11].

The Goldstone Report [10], which investigated Operation Cast Lead, is a prime example of the difficulties in establishing responsibility. Despite uncovering strong evidence of war crimes by both Israeli soldiers and Palestinian terrorists, political backlash precluded significant follow-up action [10]. Similarly, the 2014 Operation Protective Edge uncovered accountability deficiencies and underlined the humanitarian costs incurred by civilians [9].

Scholars believe that the UN's humanitarian efforts in Gaza have been mostly reactive, focussing on emergency supplies rather than tackling the conflict's fundamental drivers, such as the Israeli blockade, settlement growth, and intra-Palestinian political tensions [13, 15]. This has perpetuated a cycle of humanitarian crises without addressing the underlying causes [24]. latest evaluations imply that stronger collaboration with regional actors, such as Egypt and Qatar, as well as local NGOs, could strengthen the relevance and legitimacy of UN initiatives.

Furthermore, experts recognise the growing necessity to re-examine the R2P philosophy in long-term wars such as Gaza, where the border between humanitarian assistance and political negotiation is blurred [17]. Reforms have been proposed that would limit the UNSC's veto power in cases of mass crimes and strengthen the UN's ability to hold offenders accountable through collaboration with the International Criminal Court (ICC) "Institutional analysis highlights how the Security Council's colonial-era veto privileges remain a core barrier to impartial humanitarian action" (GCSP, 2025).

In conclusion, available research reveals the conflicts between legal norms, political reality, and humanitarian needs in Gaza. Understanding these tensions is critical for developing treatments that go beyond immediate relief and address the underlying causes of insecurity and civilian vulnerability.

2.1 The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and Humanitarian Intervention

After the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and the crimes in the Balkans, the idea of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) became a prominent paradigm in international affairs. [11] In the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, the UN supported Responsibility to Protect (R2P), emphasising the duty of the international community to safeguard populations against major atrocities such as crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide [1]. According to R2P, governments should protect their citizens, not use sovereignty as a cover to mistreat them. R2P implementation is still controversial, though, particularly when it comes to politically complicated and protracted crises like the Gaza issue.

R2P, [1] is a "normative shift" in international law that promotes prompt action and preventive steps to deal with humanitarian disasters. However, the implementation of R2P has been uneven and frequently impacted by political factors, including the objectives of strong nations and geopolitical dynamics [8]. This disparity is clear in the Gaza conflict, where international reactions have come under fire for being inefficient and selective in their treatment of humanitarian needs and human rights abuses.

2.2 The United Nations' Role in Humanitarian Crises

In international efforts to handle humanitarian crises, such as those in Gaza, the United Nations (UN) has played a pivotal role. Relief missions, peace lobbying, and aid delivery through organisations like [16] UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) have all been part of the UN's humanitarian activities in Gaza. However, political differences, travel restrictions, and the absence of an efficient enforcement system to guarantee accountability for transgressions of international law have frequently made these efforts extremely difficult [10].

The UN's reliance on reaching an agreement among member states, which frequently results in inaction or weak resolutions, has limited its ability to actively interfere in the Gaza crisis [16]. Vetoes by permanent members, especially the United States, have made it difficult for the UN to take decisive action, making it difficult for the Security Council in particular to adopt a united position on Gaza [8].

2.3 Humanitarian Consequences of the Gaza Conflict

With a high death toll, mass displacement, and infrastructure destruction, the Gaza conflict has a serious humanitarian impact. Civilians have suffered greatly as a result of the 2008–2009, 2014, and 2021 increases in violence in Gaza. More than 1,400 Palestinians were killed in the 2008–2009 conflict, many of them civilians, and extensive infrastructure damage was caused [11]. In a similar vein, 75% of the 2,200 Palestinians murdered during the 2014 violence were civilians (Gaza Human Rights Commission, 2015).

These increases highlight the ongoing inability of international interventions including those carried out by the UN to stop or lessen the misery endured by Gaza's civilian populace [2]. The prolonged fighting and Israel's blockade, which limits the flow of people and supplies into Gaza, frequently make it difficult for UN organisations to carry out their work despite repeated appeals for humanitarian access [9].

2.4 Limitations of UN Interventions in Gaza

The UN's inability to stop the bloodshed and hold those responsible for violations of international law accountable is one of the main complaints leveled about its involvement in the Gaza conflict. The political complexity of the situation and the lack of a clear peacebuilding plan have frequently hampered the UN's efforts, despite multiple resolutions and pleas for peace [12]. In certain cases, the UN has been charged with not having the political will to take on Israel, a major ally of the United States and other permanent members of the Security Council [3]. International organisations and Palestinian citizens have become frustrated as a result, believing that the UN's response has fallen short.

Furthermore, the UN's dependence on a diplomatic strategy has come under fire for failing to address the conflict's underlying causes, which include the Israeli occupation, the blockade of Gaza, and the continuous growth of settlements in the West Bank. [10] humanitarian efforts in Gaza have mostly been

reactive rather than proactive, emphasising short-term fixes for the underlying political problems rather than long-term fixes.

2.5 Improving UN Response to Gaza's Humanitarian Crisis

Several academics have suggested changes to strengthen the UN's capacity to address humanitarian emergencies, especially the conflict in Gaza. [13] asserts that the UN needs to think about more forceful options, like targeted sanctions or the deployment of peacekeeping troops in cases of egregious human rights abuses, rather than continuing to rely solely on diplomatic measures. Furthermore, the idea of "humanitarian intervention" needs to be re-examined in light of how well interventions work to stop atrocities and enhance humanitarian conditions in areas of war [1].

Pape R. [16] has highlighted that to improve its capacity to provide humanitarian relief and promote enduring peace, the UN must fortify its collaboration with regional actors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). A more nuanced response to the Gaza situation that takes into consideration the region's complicated political circumstances may be provided by increased collaboration with the Arab League and other Middle Eastern states.

In summary, the literature on the UN's involvement in the Gaza conflict highlights serious obstacles to the successful provision of humanitarian aid and the implementation of R2P. Political differences, uneven application of international law, and a lack of coordination with regional parties have limited the UN's actions, despite the organization's noteworthy attempts to lessen the effects of the conflict. To guarantee long-term peace and security for Gaza's civilian population, future attempts to resolve the conflict must concentrate on strengthening the UN's capacity to take decisive action, include local stakeholders, and address the conflict's underlying causes.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory case study design to examine the United Nations (UN) response to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The case study method is appropriate for conducting in-depth investigations of complex social and political phenomena in real-world settings [23] The study examines three major combat escalations: Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), Operation Protective Edge (2014), and the May 2021 escalation. These cases were carefully chosen because they reflect pivotal moments in the Gaza conflict that highlight the ongoing limitations of UN humanitarian interventions under the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) framework.

The analysis is based on secondary sources, such as official UN reports, resolutions, UNRWA operational updates, scholarly journal publications, respected NGO reports (Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International), and verifiable media coverage. These sources offer valuable insights into the political, legal, and humanitarian aspects of each escalation. A thematic analysis was carried out to uncover common difficulties, intervention patterns, and policy implications. Thematic analysis is useful for systematically organising and analysing qualitative data [3]. Key documents were analysed and manually classified to identify themes such as political differences, operational hurdles, financing limits, and accountability issues. This coding approach enables the identification of common trends and important issues influencing the UN's ability to protect civilians. By integrating many case studies with theme coding, the study assures methodological rigour, evidence triangulation, and a thorough knowledge of the variables that impede effective humanitarian action in Gaza.

There are three primary areas of concentration for the research. It first examines the conflict's humanitarian effects, examining the effects of ongoing violence and blockades on Gaza's civilian population. This entails looking at trends in relocation, casualty rates, and the devastation of vital infrastructure. Second, the report assesses how well the UN's response mechanisms such as providing humanitarian aid, promoting international law, and mediating peace agreements work. The study highlights important advantages and disadvantages by evaluating these mechanisms closely. Lastly, the report looks at areas where international law is not being applied correctly and suggests practical changes to improve

the UN's ability to resolve disputes and provide humanitarian aid. Through this multifaceted approach, the methodology provides a robust framework for addressing the research objectives and generating meaningful insights into the Gaza conflict.

4.0 Data Analysis

4.1 Operation Cast Lead (2008–2009)

Israel's major military escalation in Gaza, Operation Cast Lead, began in December 2008 and lasted until January 2009 intending to halt rocket firing from Palestinian militants into southern Israel. More than 1,400 Palestinians were killed during the 22-day battle, with women and children making up the majority of those killed [4]. The humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza was made worse by the extensive destruction of vital infrastructure, including government buildings, hospitals, and schools, which increased the civilian toll.

The United Nations found it difficult to act decisively, even though international involvement was desperately needed. Due to divisions within the UN Security Council (UNSC), important members including the US vetoed resolutions that would have levied penalties or demanded more robust measures. The UNSC's political impasse was a reflection of larger geopolitical forces, as Western nations, especially the US continued to strongly back Israel's right to self-defence, frequently at the price of addressing the operation's humanitarian effects.

The United Nations authorised the Goldstone Report, which looked into claims of war crimes during the conflict after it ended. [7] the study discovered evidence of violations by Palestinian armed groups and Israeli troops, including the targeting of civilian facilities and the use of disproportionate force. The report's conclusions, however, did not result in significant accountability. The report's implementation was hampered by political disagreements among UNSC members, underscoring the UN's limited capacity to uphold its resolutions and hold parties responsible for violations of international law.

There were many obstacles in the way of the UN's humanitarian response during Cast Lead, especially through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). The continuous violence and the siege of Gaza made it extremely difficult to deliver humanitarian goods. Israeli restrictions and the challenges of accessing Gaza's disjointed infrastructure hindered efforts to transfer food, medical supplies, and other vital resources. These access restrictions made it more difficult for the UN to successfully lessen the suffering of the Palestinian people.

4.2 Operation Protective Edge (2014)

Operation Protective Edge, which started as a reaction to the kidnapping and killing of three Israeli teens in the West Bank, caused the conflict in Gaza to erupt once more in the summer of 2014. Over 2,200 Palestinians lost their lives in the fighting, with about 1,400 of them being civilians [5]. Neighbourhoods in Gaza were extensively destroyed during the operation, along with important infrastructure like power plants, hospitals, and schools. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced to relocate as entire residential districts in areas like Rafah and Shuja'iyya were leveled.

With UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and senior officials repeatedly calling for a rapid end to hostilities, the UN played a crucial role in mediating ceasefires between the warring sides. UNRWA also carried on with its humanitarian work, giving the displaced people immediate housing, food assistance, and medical attention. But just like in earlier escalations, political impasses and a lack of enforcement tools hindered the UN's attempts.

The UN's inability to establish a durable and successful ceasefire was a major weakness in its approach. Although short-term ceasefires were mediated, both sides frequently breached them, which led to a resurgence of bloodshed. The UN's reputation as a mediator was further damaged when the UNSC did not take decisive action to put an end to the violence or hold Israel responsible for civilian deaths.

Furthermore, the inability of the UN to address the underlying causes of the conflict such as the embargo and the continued Israeli military presence in Gaza limited its capacity to safeguard the civilian population in Gaza.

The UN's response was also influenced by the political circumstances surrounding the crisis in 2014. Citing Israel's right to self-defense and highlighting the necessity of a negotiated two-state solution, the US, a permanent member of the UNSC, persisted in blocking resolutions that were critical of Israel's conduct. The idea that the UN could not act impartially was influenced by this political bias in favor of Israel, especially when it came to demanding justice for war crimes perpetrated by both sides.

4.3 May 2021 Escalation

This battle, which was sparked by tensions in East Jerusalem, claimed the lives of 13 Israelis and 250 Palestinians. Despite coordinating humanitarian aid and mediating a ceasefire, the UN came under fire for failing to address the underlying issues of blockades and territory disputes.

Tensions in East Jerusalem, especially around the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, where Palestinian families were being evicted by Israeli authorities, were the catalyst for the May 2021 escalation. Israeli soldiers and Palestinian militants in Gaza engaged in violent clashes and protests as a result. Thirteen Israelis and 250 Palestinians, including 66 children, were murdered over the 11 days of fierce warfare. Buildings, highways, and power plants were all the targets of attacks during the battle, which seriously damaged Gaza's infrastructure "Recent InSAR analysis shows over 190,000 buildings were damaged or destroyed by mid-2024, revealing sharp spikes following conflict escalations" [17]

Although the UN played a variety of roles in the May 2021 conflict, its response was criticised for not doing enough to address the fundamental problems of the conflict. The UN called for a truce and coordinated humanitarian relief, but it mostly ignored the core issues, which included the siege of Gaza, the growth of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and the ongoing territorial disputes. Although it was commended for stopping the immediate violence, the ceasefire mediated by Egypt and the UN, which went into effect after 11 days of combat, did not result in a comprehensive peace deal.

The UN came under fire for not stopping the escalation in the first place. Even though the UN had previously denounced Israeli operations in East Jerusalem, Israeli policy was not significantly impacted by its resolutions. When the US vetoed a resolution urging an early ceasefire, the UNSC's political divides once again proved to be a significant barrier. Furthermore, the UN ignored the systemic problems of the embargo and the political impasse between Israel and the Palestinians in favor of concentrating on immediate humanitarian help, even though it was crucial.

In the context of the Gaza conflict, the 2021 escalation highlighted the UN's limited power. UN humanitarian activities were once again limited by political concerns and access concerns, despite UN Secretary-General António Guterres's efforts to advocate for the protection of civilians and demand a stop to hostilities. The necessity for a more thorough approach to the Gaza crisis was brought to light by the ineffective enforcement of international law and the failure to address the conflict's underlying causes.

4.4 Conclusions

Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), Operation Protective Edge (2014), and the May 2021 escalation are three significant escalations that highlight the ongoing difficulties the UN has in meeting the humanitarian needs of Gaza's civilian populace. Although the UN has played a significant role in mediating ceasefires and providing humanitarian aid, its efforts have frequently been impeded by political impasses, a dearth of enforcement tools, and an incapacity to address the root causes of the conflict. The UN's response has also been significantly shaped by the geopolitical dynamics within the UNSC, especially the dominance of the United States.

The ongoing suffering of Gaza's civilian population and the recurrent character of the conflict underscore the shortcomings of the current international response and the pressing need for changes to the

UN's humanitarian operations and conflict resolution methodology. These lessons indicate that attaining long-term peace and stability in Gaza requires a more thorough and proactive approach that addresses the conflict's underlying causes as well as its immediate humanitarian demands.

5.0 Discussion

The review of the UN's response to the Gaza conflict identifies several structural issues that have continuously weakened the organization's capacity to support a sustainable peace process and the efficacy of its humanitarian efforts. These difficulties are complex and include operational limitations, financial shortages, and political differences. All of these factors have made it difficult to effectively address Gaza's humanitarian crises and underlying political problems. Significant changes to the UN system are necessary for a comprehensive strategy to address these issues, as is increased collaboration with other international actors and organisations.

5.1 Political Divisions and the Role of the United States

The political differences inside the UN Security Council (UNSC) have been one of the biggest obstacles to the UN taking effective action in the Gaza crisis. The UNSC is the principal body in charge of preserving world peace and security, and as such, it has a significant influence on how the world community responds to emergencies such as the fighting in Gaza. But the UNSC's five permanent members' veto power, especially that of the US, which has long used it to thwart resolutions that criticise Israel, has frequently paralysed the decision-making process.

The United States political and military backing of Israel has continuously impacted its position in the UNSC since Washington has vetoed resolutions that could hold Israel responsible for acts seen to be violations of human rights or international law [2]. For instance, the US obstructed requests for a rapid ceasefire during Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), which prevented the UNSC from acting decisively. In a similar vein, the United States vetoed a resolution condemning Israeli bombings on UN schools hosting refugees during the 2014 crisis [16]. By permitting impunity for transgressions of international law, this selective interventionism not only damages the UN's reputation but also feeds the cycle of violence in Gaza.

Limiting the use of veto power in situations involving egregious human rights violations or humanitarian emergencies is one possible solution to address the issues raised by the UNSC's political impasse. Limiting its use in certain circumstances, such as mass atrocities or major humanitarian crises, could improve the UN's capacity to take significant action in Gaza and other conflict areas, even if the veto power has been an essential component of the UN system since its founding. This might be accomplished by enhanced collaboration with the General Assembly, which could take action in situations where the Security Council is at a standstill, or by reforming the UNSC, such as by creating a special humanitarian veto exception.

5.2 Funding Shortfalls and Resource Constraints

Chronic financing shortages for the UN's humanitarian activities present another major obstacle to the organization's ability to adequately address the Gaza situation. For Palestinian people in Gaza, organisations like the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) are essential in providing emergency aid, medical attention, and housing. Nevertheless, these organisations frequently encounter significant financial limitations that restrict their capacity to address the magnitude of the crisis.

In particular, UNRWA has had trouble obtaining steady funding, which has limited its ability to offer Palestinian refugees essential services like food aid, healthcare, and education. This issue was made worse by the Trump administration's decision to reduce US financing to UNRWA in 2018, which left the organisation frantically seeking funds from other sources. A large humanitarian aid vacuum has resulted, depriving many of Gaza's vulnerable communities of sufficient assistance [6].

The UN should place a high priority on guaranteeing stable and sustainable funding for important humanitarian organisations to solve these budget shortages. This could entail boosting contributions from both state and non-state entities, decreasing dependence on a small number of donor nations, and diversifying the sources of support. To obtain the funds required for extensive humanitarian operations, the UN should also look at cutting-edge finance options like crowdsourcing or collaborations with businesses. These initiatives will make it possible for UN organisations to address the humanitarian needs in Gaza and other conflict areas in a timely and efficient manner.

5.3 Operational Constraints: Blockades and Access Restrictions

The Israeli-imposed embargo, which limits the flow of people, products, and aid into the region, has been one of the most enduring obstacles to UN activities in Gaza. Food, medical supplies, and other vital resources have been unable to reach Gaza's civilian population due to the embargo, which has been in effect since 2007. Additionally, the embargo limits the mobility of humanitarian workers and UN staff, which makes it challenging for organisations to evaluate local needs and deliver efficient aid.

These access limitations were rendered worse by ongoing confrontations during escalations such as Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009) and Operation Protective Edge (2014), which made it risky for UN staff to enter Gaza and provide aid. For instance, UNRWA said that Israeli airstrikes during Operation Cast Lead damaged its schools, which were serving as shelters for displaced persons. This caused civilian casualties and made it more difficult for the organisation to give aid (Gaza Human Rights Commission, 2009). The UN's ability to lessen the conflict's humanitarian effects has been severely impeded by these operational limitations.

In order to overcome these operational limitations, the UN and regional actors must work together more closely and vigorously to support unfettered humanitarian access. The UN must keep advocating for the easing of the embargo on Gaza, which worsens the political and economic turmoil in the area while impeding humanitarian help. Furthermore, enhancing collaborations with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) may help better coordinate humanitarian operations and guarantee that relief reaches the most vulnerable.

5.4 Enhancing Accountability: Strengthening International Justice Mechanisms

The UN's incapacity to hold both Israeli troops and Palestinian militants accountable for transgressions of international law, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and human rights abuses, is a significant drawback of its approach to the Gaza crisis. Even while the UN has worked to record and publicise these abuses, notably through the Goldstone Report (2009), its suggestions have frequently been ignored, and those responsible have not been called to account.

The UN and the International Criminal Court (ICC) working together more closely is one possible way to reduce this accountability gap. The ICC, which has war crimes jurisdiction, may be crucial in looking into and bringing charges against those behind the crimes in Gaza. By getting involved, the ICC would make it clear that transgressions of international law will not go unpunished. Nevertheless, this would necessitate collaboration from Israel and the Palestinian Authority, both of whom have previously voiced opposition to ICC jurisdiction, as well as political will from UN members.

It would be necessary to increase United Nations collaboration with international justice organisations such as the ICC to strengthen accountability measures. To ensure that individuals convicted of war crimes or crimes against humanity are held accountable, this may entail promoting wider support for the ICC's investigations into the Gaza conflict. The UN might also endeavor to establish a more independent and strong international commission to keep an eye on and record abuses of human rights in Gaza and other conflict areas.

6.0 Conclusions

This study sought to analyse how the United Nations has used the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) policy to address Gaza's ongoing humanitarian situation. The study examines three major conflict escalations Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), Operation Protective Edge (2014), and the May 2021 escalation and demonstrates how entrenched political divisions, operational constraints, and chronic underfunding have limited the UN's ability to protect civilians and uphold international humanitarian law.

The analysis demonstrates that, despite the UN's important contributions to mediating ceasefires and delivering humanitarian supplies, its efforts have frequently been hampered by the Security Council's veto process, limited enforcement powers, and a lack of responsibility for violations. These flaws highlight the need to evaluate the current global humanitarian protection system, notably the actual application of the R2P theory in long-running wars such as Gaza.

This study adds to the existing discussion by identifying systemic gaps that undermine the UN's interventions and proposing potential reforms such as limiting veto use in mass atrocity contexts, ensuring sustainable funding, and strengthening partnerships with regional actors and local NGOs. However, the study is limited by its dependence on secondary data, which prevents the incorporation of firsthand local viewpoints, particularly those of Gaza-based residents and humanitarian workers. Future research should fill this gap by conducting primary fieldwork or collaborating with local NGOs to highlight under-represented voices. Further comparative research should look into how the R2P framework works in other long-running conflicts to develop more context-sensitive policy recommendations.

In conclusion, tackling the structural hurdles that prevent effective UN action is critical to enhancing the protection of vulnerable communities in Gaza and other conflict zones throughout the world.

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