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Al-Aqsa Mosque & Sheikh Jarrah: Israel-Palestine

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Why in News

Recently, Israeli armed forces attacked **Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Haram esh-Sharif in Jerusalem**, ahead of a march by Zionist nationalists commemorating Israel's capture of the eastern half of the city in 1967.

- The threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of **Sheikh Jarrah** escalated the crisis further.
- **Zionism** is a worldwide Jewish movement that resulted in the establishment and development of the state of Israel and that now supports the state of Israel as a Jewish homeland.



Key Points

- **Al-Aqsa Mosque:**

- It is one of the holiest structures in the Islamic faith. It sits inside a 35-acre site known by Muslims as Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary, and by Jews as the Temple Mount.

The site is part of the Old City of Jerusalem, **sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims.**

- It is believed to have been **completed early in the eighth century** and faces the Dome of the Rock, the golden-domed Islamic shrine that is a widely recognized symbol of Jerusalem.
- The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO**, has classified the **Old City of Jerusalem and its walls as a World Heritage Site.**

- **Conflict over Jerusalem:**

- Jerusalem has been at the centre of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to the original 1947 **United Nations (UN)** partition plan, Jerusalem was proposed to be an international city.
- But in the **first Arab Israel war of 1948**, the Israelis captured the western half of the city, and **Jordan took the eastern part**, including the Old City that houses Haram al-Sharif.
- Israel captured East Jerusalem from Jordan in the **Six-Day War 1967** and annexed it later.

Since its annexation, **Israel has expanded settlements in East Jerusalem.**

- **Israel** sees the whole city as its “**unified, eternal capital**”, whereas the **Palestinian leadership** across the political spectrum have maintained that they would not accept any compromise formula for the future Palestinian state unless **East Jerusalem is its capital.**

- **Sheikh Jarrah Issue:**

- Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced out of their homes when the State of Israel was created in historical Palestine in 1948.

Twenty-eight of those **Palestinian families moved to Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem to settle there.**

- In 1956, when East Jerusalem was ruled by Jordan, the Jordanian Ministry of Construction and Development and the **UN Relief and Works Agency facilitated the construction of houses for these families in Sheikh Jarrah.** But Israel would capture East Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967.

By the early 1970s, **Jewish agencies started demanding the families leave the land.**

- Earlier this year (2021), **the Central Court in East Jerusalem upheld a decision to evict four Palestinian families** from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah in favor of Jewish settlers.
- The issue remains **unresolved and potentially inflammable.**

- **India's Stand on Israel-Palestine Issue:**

- India **recognised Israel in 1950** but it is also **the first non-Arab country to recognise Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)** as the sole representative of the Palestinian.

India is also one of the first countries to **recognise the statehood of Palestine in 1988.**

- In 2014, India favored **UNHRC's** resolution to probe Israel's human rights violations in Gaza. Despite supporting the probe, **India abstained from voting against Israel in UNHRC in 2015.**
- As a part of Link West Policy, India has **de-hyphenated its relationship with Israel and Palestine in 2018** to treat both the countries mutually independent and exclusive.
- In June 2019, India **voted in favor of a decision introduced by Israel** in the **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** that objected to granting consultative status to a Palestinian non-governmental organization.
- So far **India has tried to maintain the image of its historical moral supporter for Palestinian self-determination**, and at the same time to **engage in the military, economic, and other strategic relations with Israel.**

- **Related Developments:**

- In March 2021, **International Criminal Court (ICC)** launched investigations into the war crimes in **Palestinian territories occupied by Israel (West Bank and the Gaza Strip).**
- In April 2021, the **US restored at least USD 235 million in financial assistance to the Palestinians.**

Way Forward

- The **world at large needs to come together for a peaceful solution** but the reluctance of the Israeli government and other involved parties have aggravated the issue more. Thus a **balanced approach would help to maintain favorable relations with Arab countries as well as Israel.**
- The recent **normalization agreements between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco**, known as the **Abraham Accords**, are the steps in the right direction. All **regional powers should envisage peace** between the two countries on line of Abraham Accords.

Source:TH