The Arab-Israeli conflict, 1945-1979

Source analysis: Diplomacy and the PLO

The following documents relate to diplomacy and the PLO.

Source A

Political cartoon by Garland published in the British newspaper the Daily Telegraph, 15 November 1974. The cartoon shows Arafat holding an olive branch. The caption at the bottom reads: "Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand!' (Yasser Arafat).
Source B

Arafat's speech to the UN, 13 November 1974.

The difference between the revolutionary and the terrorist lies in the reason for which each fights. Whoever stands by a just cause and fights for liberation from invaders and colonialists cannot be called terrorist. Those who wage war to occupy, colonize and oppress other people are the terrorists. The Palestinian people had to resort to armed struggle when they lost faith in the international community, which ignored their rights, and when it became clear that not one inch of Palestine could be regained through exclusively political means.

The PLO dreams and hopes for one democratic state where Christian, Jew and Muslim live in justice, equality, fraternity and progress. The chairman of the PLO and leader of the Palestinian revolution appeals to the General Assembly to accompany the Palestinian people in its struggle to attain its right of self-determination. ... I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand.


Source C

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3236, on 22 November 1974, recognizes the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

**QUESTION OF PALESTINE**

The General Assembly,

**Having considered** the question of Palestine ... 

**Reaffirms** the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine, including: 

a. The right to self-determination without external interference;

b. The right to national independence and sovereignty,.....

**Reaffirms** also the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted, and calls for their return; ...

**Recognizes** that the Palestinian people is a principal party in the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East; ...

**Requests** the Secretary-General to establish contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization on all matters concerning the question of Palestine;

**Requests** the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its thirtieth session on the implementation of the present resolution;
Decides to include the item entitled "Question of Palestine" in the provisional agenda of its thirtieth session.


Source D

Extract written by British historian Paul Johnson.

As a threat to the stability of all societies under the rule of law, international terrorism should have been the primary concern of the United Nations. But by the 1970s, the UN was a corrupt and demoralized body, and its ill-considered interventions were more inclined to promote violence that to prevent it. ...

As we have already noted, Idi Amin, a terrorist himself and a patron and beneficiary of terrorism, was given a standing ovation in 1975 when he advocated genocide. Yasser Arafat, head of the PLO, the world's largest terrorist organisation, was actually given a seat in the Assembly. The UN Secretariat had long since ceased to apply the principles of the charter.


Source E

Extract written by British historian TG Fraser.

Arafat's opportunity to underline that fact [Arab League recognition of the PLO as sole representatives of the Palestinians] came just two weeks later before the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. In September, a number of states had proposed that The Question of Palestine' be debated by the Assembly and a subsequent vote invited the PLO to take part. The extent of that vote, 82 in favour, 4 against and 20 abstentions, showed how far the organisation had come in terms of international acceptance. Those who hoped he would use the occasion to signal the PLO's acquiescence [agreement] in a 'ministate' solution were disappointed, but the reality of Arafat's position as head of a broad coalition made that impossible. Instead, he chose to set before the world body a full statement of Palestinian grievances and his dream of a future state in which Palestinians and Jews would live together ...

Support for the Palestinians amongst the countries of Africa and Asia was high. In the summer of 1975 concerted effort to deprive Israel of her UN membership only just failed, but in November a resolution was passed in the General Assembly in which Zionism was identified as 'a form of racialism' As the United Nations had ceased to be an actor of any consequence in the Arab-Israeli conflict, such things had little practical result, but they helped bring to the surface Israeli fears that the world's hand would always turn against
the Jews and hence did nothing to encourage a spirit of compromise.


**Source-based questions**

1 a What, according to Source E, was meant by a "mini-state" solution? (2 Marks)

b What message concerning the role of the PLO in the Middle East is conveyed by the political cartoonist in Source A? (3 Marks)

2 In what ways do Sources A and B support the opinions expressed in Source D? (6 Marks)

3 With reference to their origin and purpose, assess the value and limitations of Sources C and E for historians studying the role of international organizations in the Middle East and beyond. (6 Marks)

4 Explain how the recognition of the PLO by the Arab League and the UN might help to bring a possible solution to the situation in the Arab-Israeli dispute. (8 Marks)