

NE Insights

CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

14 November 2023

INTRODUCTION

**What's happening
in the Middle East?**

On 7 Oct 2023, Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel.

The Israeli retaliation has been firm and strong, with Israeli PM Netanyahu declaring war on Hamas.

This is one of the deadliest wars in the Gaza area.

Thousands of lives, including many women and children, have been killed as a result of the long-standing conflicts over the years.

*Suggested reading: What is the Palestinian Group Hamas?
CNA, 9 Oct 2023*



SINGAPORE'S POSITION ON ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

**Singapore condemns
all acts of terrorism
and wanton violence**

Terrorist acts cannot be justified by any rationale, regardless of problems or historical grievances.

Singapore strongly condemned the terrorist attacks by Hamas.

And while Israel has the right to defend its citizens and territory, it must also comply with international humanitarian law.



“Singapore must always take a **zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism**. We have to be categorical in rejecting terrorism - whoever, whenever, wherever it is perpetrated. ... we do not do so just out of sympathy, but because **terrorism is a clear and present danger** and threat for Singapore and Singaporeans.”

*- Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan,
during the Parliamentary Motion on the Israel-Hamas Conflict, 6 Nov 2023*

Singapore supports a negotiated two-state solution, consistent with relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions

A two-state solution will allow Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side, in peace and security.

But meanwhile, the world, including Singapore, cannot ignore the unfolding humanitarian crisis in the Gaza area arising from Israeli operations.



Singapore has supported UN Resolution ES-10/21 for the establishment of a humanitarian truce to suspend conflict, so that food, water, medical supplies, and fuel can be delivered safely and continuously to civilians in Gaza.



Singapore's vote came after very careful consideration, which included raising two significant omissions in the resolution:

- No mention of Hamas' acts of terror, and
- Does not acknowledge Israel's right to defend its citizens and territory in compliance with international law.



“We believe that the Palestinian people have the right to a homeland, and that Israel has the right to live within secure borders. **A negotiated two-state solution is the only way** for Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace and security. Realising this may seem difficult, now more than ever. But that should not deter us from continuing to support the international community's efforts in this area.”

- DPM Lawrence Wong,
during the Parliamentary Motion
on the Israel-Hamas Conflict,
6 Nov 2023

KEY REFLECTIONS FOR SINGAPORE

Security threats are real and can happen to any country

There have been two major wars in two years - the ongoing **Russia-Ukraine** and **Israel-Hamas** conflicts.

These wars remind us that even as we enjoy the peace and security here in Singapore, we must never take national security and social harmony for granted.

And how things can go wrong if we become complacent and ill-prepared.

All Singaporeans can play a part in defending Singapore

We must ourselves protect our home and safeguard our way of life.

A strong and capable Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) will protect our sovereignty and national interests, and deter potential adversaries.

National Service (NS), as the bedrock of our fighting force and national security, remains critical for Singapore's continued survival and success.

In this complex threat landscape, all Singaporeans must play an active role in Total Defence and SGSecure to protect Singapore and our shared way of life.

Total Defence: There's a Part for Everyone

Since the launch of Total Defence in 1984, Total Defence has rallied Singaporeans together in responding to challenges that threaten Singapore's independence and well-being, such as terrorism, SARS, economic downturn and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic.



SGSecure is Singapore's community response to the terrorism threat. It is a national movement to sensitise, train, and mobilise everyone in Singapore to play a part to prevent and deal with a terrorist attack.



Find out more on Total Defence here:
<https://go.gov.sg/totaldefencesg>



Find out more on SGSecure here:
<https://go.gov.sg/-sgsecure>



Opposing groups protesting in New York City outside the Israeli Consulate on 8 Oct, 2023. (Getty Images/ AFP)



A lone pro-Israel counter-protester waves an Israeli flag against pro-Palestinian protesters at Calgary City Hall on 9 Oct, 2023. ARYN TOOMBS / FOR LIVEWIRE CALGARY

We must not let external events affect Singapore's racial and religious peace

The mutual trust and respect among different races and religions in Singapore have been built over many years by generations of Singaporeans.

We must treasure the racial and religious peace that we enjoy in Singapore and not take it for granted.

The ongoing conflict could evoke concerns and emotions among people, like the violent clashes that we are seeing overseas. Thankfully, most Singaporeans responded in a measured and positive manner. Singaporeans came together to donate generously towards the relief efforts. The Singapore Government has also pledged support.

Let's continue to stay united and protect our precious cohesion and harmony.



“This is going to be quite a tough period. But our fundamental attitude cannot change. **We are all Singaporeans.** We have a **precious peace within Singapore**, we must **never let external events affect that.**”

*- Minister for Home Affairs and Law Mr K Shanmugam,
during the mediadoorstop on the Situation in the Middle East, 12 Oct 2023*

We must also be mindful of online attempts to rile up emotions and sow distrust in our society. Disinformation targeted at particular segments of society can whip up communal tensions.

How can we stay vigilant against disinformation:

- 1 Be discerning** to comments aimed to stir up discord amongst different communities in Singapore.
- 2 Be aware** of current affairs and tactics used to spread fake news.
- 3 Use social media responsibly**, such as verifying information before reacting to or sharing content.



Source - Pexels

We must stay ready and prepared for uncertainties and possible disruptions

There are global concerns that a drawn out conflict could introduce risks to the two vital shipping choke-points in the Middle East, disrupt supply chains, and increase shipping and freight costs.

Singapore will continue to adapt ourselves to evolving global circumstances - enhancing our economic resilience by diversifying our sources of supplies, strengthening our supply chain strategies and investing in connectivity infrastructure to keep trade flows going and minimise supply chain disruptions.

Together, we can overcome any disruptions or challenges that come our way.

Find out more about Singapore's economic resilience strategies on SG101: <https://go.gov.sg/sg101economy>





CONCLUSION

Our future is built upon our shared values, experiences and aspirations as Singaporeans – let's cherish the long-standing bonds amongst our people and stay as one united people to keep Singapore, our home, safe and strong.



Find out more about the conflict in the Middle East here:
<https://go.gov.sg/sg101conflictmiddleeast>



Any feedback on this issue?
Let us know through
<https://go.gov.sg/neinsights>
or email us at nexus@defence.gov.sg.

