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The United Nations and Israel

While the United Nations played a crucial role in the creation of Israel, its history has been marked by persistent antagonism toward the Jewish state. The U.N. has passed more resolutions aimed at crippling Israel economically, politically, and morally than resolutions condemning various acts of genocide and warfare throughout the world. Nonetheless, Israel's close partnership with the United States has spurred American ambassadors to veto countless anti-Israel resolutions. The strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship at the U.N. demonstrates the common values and aspirations of the two nations as they work together to confront common threats in the global arena.

The U.N.'s Role in the Creation of Israel

Passed on November 29, 1947, with 33 votes in favor, 13 against, and 10 abstentions, U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181 recommended the partition of Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish. The resolution marked the first and only time the U.N. has recommended the creation of two states through a General Assembly vote. On May 11, 1948, Israel declared its independence in accordance with the resolution. Upon the urging of the United States, the General Assembly voted a year later to grant Israel U.N. membership.

A History of Exclusion

Throughout the U.N.'s history, Israel has faced continuing obstacles to gaining membership in the Western European and Others Group (WEOG), which constitutes one of five regional groups that the U.N. first created in the early 1960s to account for the rapid growth of its membership. WEOG consistently rejected Israel's requests for membership, claiming that it failed to meet the geographic and political requirements for inclusion. In 2000, however, Israel finally gained "temporary" membership in WEOG thanks to the strong backing of the U.S., and in 2004 Israel's membership was extended indefinitely. The move amounted to a rare victory for Israel in its quest to gain acceptance and recognition as equals in the international stage.

Indeed, in 1975, Israel faced a singularly outrageous challenge to its legitimacy when the U.N. adopted a resolution that equated Zionism with racism. The phrase was later overturned under a new resolution advanced by the United States. Thanks to U.S. pressure, the phrase was also omitted from the agenda of the U.N. Conference on Racism in 2001. Similarly, while the U.N. has condemned virtually every conceivable form of racism, it refused for most of its history to condemn anti-Semitism. It was not until 1994 that the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva, at the insistence of the United States, finally passed a resolution condemning the hatred of Jews.

U.N. Structures Continually Vilify Israel

The U.N. has repeatedly held "Emergency Special Sessions" that focus solely on the Arab conflict with Israel. While these sessions were originally conceived in 1950 for emergencies like the Korean War, the sessions since then have focused primarily on condemning Israel despite numerous other

world emergencies such as the genocides in Rwanda and Darfur. Likewise, “Special Committees” and “Palestinian Units” of the U.N. spend more than \$3 million a year to spread anti-Israel propaganda. These bodies constitute the source of some of the worst of the U.N.’s anti-Israel activity. The United States consistently utilizes its leadership role at the U.N. to condemn this one-sided behavior.

The United States: A Solid Friend of Israel at the U.N.

The United States refusal to abandon the Jewish state at the U.N. constitutes a powerful emblem of the countries’ close relationship. Beginning with Harry Truman’s courageous decision to recognize Israel at its founding and to vote accordingly at the U.N., the United States has defended Israel constantly and vigorously whenever it faced one-sided proposals at the world body.

More recently, in a January 3, 2006, letter to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, U.S. ambassador John Bolton criticized the U.N. for promoting an anti-Israel agenda, which included the dissemination of maps that do not mention Israel. The United States has frequently used its veto to protect Israel from condemnatory Security Council votes – in fact, almost all U.S. vetoes cast since 1986 have concerned U.N. resolutions against Israel. America’s strong alliance with Israel at the U.N. reflects the commitment of both democratic nations to continue working together in their common struggle against terrorism.