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The United Nations and Israel

While the United Nations played a crucial role in the creation of Israel, U.N. history has been marked by persistent antagonism toward the Jewish state. This has been true largely because of the automatic majority in the General Assembly garnered by the Arab states and their influence among the Non-Aligned movement. The U.N. has passed more resolutions aimed at isolating Israel than resolutions condemning genocide, warfare, and human rights violations throughout the world. While Israel has recently made strides in gaining acceptance in certain U.N. fora, the overall culture and structure of the organization remain deeply hostile to the Jewish state. The UN jeopardizes its reputation on an ongoing basis by devoting disproportionate time and resources to delegitimizing Israel.

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. The Arab states and the leadership of the Palestinians rejected partition and declared war on the Jewish state. By contrast, the leaders of the Zionist movement accepted the partition plan. On May 14, 1948, Israel declared its independence in accordance with the resolution. Upon American encouragement, the General Assembly voted a year later to grant Israel U.N. membership.



Iran and other Muslim and Arab countries routinely use the United Nations as a forum to vilify Israel.

A History of Exclusion

In 1975, Israel faced a singularly outrageous challenge to its legitimacy when the U.N. adopted General Assembly Resolution 3379, which equated Zionism with racism. After more than 15 years of efforts by the United States to overturn it, the General Assembly in 1991 revoked the “Zionism is Racism” resolution. President George H.W. Bush personally introduced this motion, stating that Resolution 3379 “mocks... the principles upon which the United Nations was founded.”

Beyond this effort to delegitimize the Jewish state on the political and moral level, the U.N. system discriminated against Israel in countless procedural ways. For 50 years, Arab states prevailed in excluding Israel from membership in a U.N. regional group. Without such membership, Israel could not sit on the Security Council or other key U.N. bodies.

In 2000, the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) offered Israel temporary membership in WEOG thanks to the strong backing of the United States. Israel accepted, and its membership was

extended indefinitely in 2004. The move amounted to a rare victory for Israel in its quest to gain acceptance and recognition as an equal in the international stage.

While Israel's acceptance at the U.N. has improved, various U.N. members and agencies continue to their efforts to isolate Israel and equate Zionism with racism. The United States withdrew its delegation from the 2001 U.N. Conference on Racism, known colloquially as the Durban conference, after the Arab states and their allies among the Non-Aligned states and anti-Israel non-governmental organizations hijacked the agenda and the conference degenerated into a forum of anti-Semitism. Withdrawing the U.S. delegation, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced at the time, "You do not combat racism by conferences that produce declarations containing hateful language, some of which is a throwback to the days of 'Zionism equals racism.'" Thanks to U.S. pressure, the phrase equating Zionism with racism was omitted from the final declaration of the conference.

Another conference ("Durban II") has been scheduled for early 2009 to review the progress that nations have made combating racism since the 2001 gathering. Although organizers have yet to delineate a specific agenda, the fact that Libya and Cuba serve as the chair and vice-chair, respectively, leads experts to fear that the conference will again be overtaken by those who seek to vilify the Jewish state. Similarly, while the U.N. has condemned virtually every conceivable form of racism, it has 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 U.S., 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-Israeli conflict. 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. During the previous U.N. session, which began in September 2006, the General Assembly passed 22 one-sided resolutions against Israel. To date, during its 62nd session, which began in September 2007, the G.A. has passed 19 resolutions against Israel.

Likewise, three unique U.N. entities are dedicated exclusively to rectifying what the U.N. sees as Israeli oppression of the Palestinians. They include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and the Division for Palestinian Rights within the U.N. Secretariat. Together, these three agencies spend millions of dollars each year to spread anti-Israel propaganda and engage in some of the worst anti-Israel calumny. 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 U.S. refusal to abandon the Jewish state at the U.N. constitutes a powerful reflection of the countries' close relationship. Beginning with Harry Truman's courageous decision to recognize Israel at its founding and to support the U.N. partition plan, the United States has regularly defended Israel against attacks made at the U.N.

The United States has frequently used its veto to shield Israel from one-sided, condemnatory Security Council resolutions. 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 and in search of peace.