



The UN: Problem or Solution

As September 2011 approaches, we would like to ask our friends to remember the Palestinian people in their prayers so that our leadership would be guided into the best possible course of action in the coming weeks for the service of peace in the region and the world.

The idea of going to the United Nations in order to receive full recognition as a state is a legitimate initiative that has become entangled with complications. On the one hand, after more than sixty years since the original conflict, it is time for the international community to act for the liberation and independence of Palestine. On the other hand, the seemingly unbreakable bond between the United States and Israel has obstructed and prevented the UN from implementing its many resolutions to date. Instead of being drawn closer to a resolution of the conflict, we find ourselves farther away and at a deadly impasse. The only movement on the ground is the building and expansion of the Israeli illegal settlements with a wide spreading infrastructure to support them, that abolish any hope for a viable Palestinian state.

Why are the Palestinians going to the UN?

Since 1991 the Palestinian leadership has focused on realizing the political rights of the Palestinians through negotiations. Obviously, this happened with the encouragement of the United States, the international community at large, and the Quartet (the UN, USA, Russia and the European Union). The Oslo Declaration of Principles of 1993 gave false hope that direct negotiations would lead to the end of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip; and the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state by 1999, alongside the state of Israel in accordance with UN resolutions. The negotiations, however, have not yielded the desired results. They went into a vicious circle and became utterly futile. The government of Israel refused to accept the UN resolutions as terms of reference for the peace process and did not agree to a set time frame for the negotiations. Moreover, Israel considered the major final stage issues, namely, refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, and the 1967 borders as non-negotiable. Such preconditions render any negotiations useless and senseless. At the same time, President Obama tried his best to impress on Israel to halt settlement construction and expansion, but to no avail.

The United States could not provide a solution to this deadlock but instead, kept insisting on the resumption of direct negotiations between the two sides despite their proven futility. The inaction of the United States and western powers left the Palestinians with one logical and natural option which is to turn to the UN as the world governance system. It is worth noting that the conflict

over Palestine started with the UN in 1947 when it voted to partition the country into two states, totally ignoring the will of the Palestinian majority and their right to self determination. The UN, therefore, is the right address. It created the problem and it has the responsibility to resolve it.

The sad fact remains that the United States has already declared its intention to use its power of veto in order to abort the Palestinian attempt to achieve their long overdue right to an independent state, although in his speech at the 65th session of the United Nations in September 2010, President Obama praised the president of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas and said that the world can have an agreement that will lead to the creation of a new Palestinian state next year {2011}

According to the UN Charter, a state can obtain UN membership if both the Security Council and the General Assembly vote affirmatively in its favor. In September the Palestinians will submit their application for membership. The Palestinians realize that to go to the UN Security Council first is to be repulsed by a guaranteed United States veto; while to go to the General Assembly first where there is no veto, they stand a good chance to acquire the needed two thirds majority vote. It is important to note that there are 193 countries that make up the UN body. For Palestine to become a member, at least 129 countries must vote for it, of which 122 already recognize the state of Palestine within the 1967 borders. Such an achievement would not mean the resolution of all the difficulties but it will definitely send a strong message about the will of the international community, and will help the Palestinians to negotiate with the Israelis from a position of strength and equal status as a recognized state. If, however, Israel continues to spurn Palestinian rights, we hope and pray that there will be NO resort to war or violence but that the international community of nations will utilize all peaceful means that will compel Israel to submit to the obligations of international law for the benefit of all.

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Note: Sabeel will forward, as soon as possible, more detailed background information.