

A Modest Proposal: The UN General Assembly and Palestinian Recognition

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Global Research, May 12, 2024

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [United Nations](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

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Despite being described in some circles as such, the latest vote in the United Nations General Assembly on Palestine's status is hardly extraordinary. For one, it does not vest the Palestinian territories with statehood but burnishes its credentials to join the club. It pushes those scrappy, desperate entities so despoiled and abused into deeper involvement with the processes at the UN itself. Palestinian non-observer status, granted in 2012, has left it mute in international affairs.

The May 10 resolution is seen, according [to a summary](#) from the UN, as an improvement, an "upgrade" to "the rights of the State of Palestine within the world body, but not the right to vote or put forward its candidature to such organs as the Security Council or the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)." The Assembly found Palestine a suitable candidate for full membership, recommending the Security Council "reconsider the matter favourably".

The resolution was adopted with 143 votes in favour and nine against, including US and Israel, with 25 abstentions.

The grant of Palestinian membership requires a recommendation from the most powerful arm of the UN, the Security Council.

In that body, the United States vigilantly protects Israeli interests and can be relied upon to stultify moves towards Palestinian statehood.

Just last month, an Algerian sponsored resolution seeking Palestine's admission as a state [was quashed](#) by Washington's exercise of the veto. Palestinian Statehood could only come into being, [argued](#) the US representative, from "a comprehensive peace agreement."

Sustainable peace was only possible “via a two-State solution with Israel’s security guaranteed.” The resolution as it stood was a “premature” action.

Such reasons have become stale, a de facto acceptance that any Palestinian entity, should it ever arise, would be impotent on the international stage, defenceless, impoverished and subservient to Israel’s interests. For Israel, national security entails an impotent Palestine.

As things stand, the changes that will take effect from September 10 are hardly a reason for critics to stamp their feet or for supporters to roar with approval. The new status [will permit](#), among others changes, seating alongside Member States in alphabetical order, the making of statements on behalf of a group, submitting proposals and amendments and their introduction, the right of delegate members to be elected as officers in the plenary and Main Committees of the General Assembly and “full effective participation in UN conferences and international conferences and meetings convened under the auspices of the General Assembly or, as appropriate, of other UN organs.”

With limitations duly noted, the momentum towards a more formal recognition of Palestinian statehood, and one the US-Israel partnership is increasingly losing control of, is unmistakable. In an interview on Spanish national radio RNE on May 9, the European Union’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs, **Josep Borrell**, [confirmed](#) the veracity of Irish media reports that Spain, Ireland, and a number of other EU countries will recognise a Palestinian state this month.

The General Assembly resolution proved unpalatable to Israel, whose ambassador to the UN, **Gilad Erdan**, was melodramatic and histrionic in response. Having come equipped with a shredder (a wonderful piece of equipment for a diplomat), he proceeded to place a copy of the UN Charter into it. “I shredded the ‘UN Charter’,” he [explained](#), “to illustrate what the General Assembly is doing by subverting the Security Council and supporting the entry of a terror entity.”

Watch my speech against the despicable decision to give rights of a state to the terror supporting Palestinian Authority. I shredded the "UN Charter" to illustrate what the General Assembly is doing by subverting the Security Council and supporting the entry of a terror entity.

— Ambassador Gilad Erdan גלעד ארדן (@giladerdan1) [May 10, 2024](#)

Erdan’s reasoning, which can be taken to be that of the Netanyahu government more broadly, makes no distinction about Palestinian groups, let alone the differently controlled entities in Gaza and the West Bank. Hamas and the Palestinian Authority are conflated, an easy thing to do when there is no appetite, or intention among Israel’s political classes, for the establishment of any form of sovereign Palestinian state. Just as Israeli **Defence Minister Yoav Gallant** claimed that Israel was “fighting against human animals” in Gaza following the Hamas attacks of October 7, we have Israel’s face of respectability at the UN [stating](#) the following: “The ambassadors know that the Palestinians are not ‘peace seekers’ but rather, supporters of terrorism.”

Those who label certain actions terroristic in nature often throw up the mirror to see an unpleasant reflection, even as they rage against it. The activities of Hamas on October 7 were bloodstained and traumatic; the sanguinary operations of Zionist paramilitary groups

waged to create an Israeli state were not much better. Statehood's creation is often concomitant with horrendous violence and a breach of conventions. "The annals of Zionist history," [writes](#) S. Shamiri Hassan, "are full of leaders outdoing other leaders in insisting on the importance of military power and the role of force and terror in the building and safeguarding of the Zionist state: Joseph Trumpeldor, Vladimir Jabotinsky, Menahem Begin, Ben Gurion, and all the Israeli generals."

The spectacle of the UN Charter vanishing as strips of paper in a shredder was inadvertently apt, given Israel's own flouting of international law regarding Palestinian rights for decades, not to mention its current program of massacre, famine and displacement in Gaza. The fundamental lesson of May 10 for the government of Benjamin Netanyahu is that its iron grip on the fate of Palestinian statehood is proving increasingly precarious.

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