Check Against Delivery

Statement by
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Question of Palestine

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Thank you Mr. President,

President John F. Kennedy said, "The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie... but the myth, persistent, persuasive and unrealistic."

This is the third year that I am standing before this Assembly to address this agenda item and once again, I experience a sense of déjà vu as I listen to a distortion of history. The greatest legends of Greek mythology cannot rival the fables and fabrications that have come to be associated with this debate.

This debate may take place only once a year, but anti-Israel bias pervades the UN system all year round. In 2012, this Assembly found the time to pass 22 resolutions condemning Israel – compared with only four that single out other nations.

The world’s worst human rights abusers receive a fraction of the condemnation that Israel – the only democracy in the Middle East - receives. These irresponsible actions have irreversible consequences. The states that rubberstamp the anti-Israel resolutions every year, have given the Palestinians a false sense of reality and fed their culture of victimhood.

Mr. President,

It has been one year since this assembly voted to change the Palestinian delegation’s status at the United Nations. To all those who voted in favor of the resolution last November 29, I ask the following: What exactly has changed?

Did the resolution give Palestinian Authority control over Gaza? Not in the least. Gaza comprises forty percent of the territory that President Abbas claims to represent, but he hasn’t set foot into the area in six years. It seems to me that the Palestinian Authority has been asserting more control over UN bodies than it does over the Gaza Strip. Since 2007, Gaza has been in the hands of Hamas, a terrorist organization that rains missiles on Israel’s civilians.

Did the resolution passed last year motivate the Palestinian Authority to finally hold elections? Not at all. Perhaps someone in this Assembly should remind the Palestinian Authority that its mandate expired in 2009 – and one election doesn’t mean you can rule forever.

At the same time I have to wonder, where are all the countries that claim to stand for democratic values? They are quick to cast judgment on Israel, but fall strangely silent when the Palestinians don’t cast votes.

Did the resolution passed last year inspire the Palestinian Authority to prepare their people for peace? Not in the least. Rather than teaching their children tolerance and mutual recognition, the Palestinian leadership continues to foster a culture of incitement.
Palestinian Media Watch will soon release a report documenting hundreds of examples of Palestinian incitement since the peace talks began. One such example is football teams named in honor of terrorists responsible for some of the deadliest attacks against Israelis. Instead of teaching kids to score goals, the Palestinian leadership’s goal is to glorify murderers.

Israel recently made the difficult decision to release 26 convicted murderers as part of its commitment to advancing the peace talks. Shortly after, the Palestinian Authority announced that each of these terrorists would be rewarded with $50,000 and some will earn as much as a Palestinian minister. The motto of the PA’s pension plan seems to be ‘the more you slay, the more we pay.’

As the PA sings praises to murderers, the international community tunes out and mysteriously loses its voice. I wonder how taxpayers in London and Luxemburg would feel knowing that their tax dollars are being used to reward convicted murderers?

The Palestinian leadership has yet to learn an important lesson. You cannot abuse others and call yourself the abused. And you cannot claim your history is being denied, while denying the history of the Jewish nation.

In Gaza, Hamas is poisoning the hearts and minds of the next generation. They recently published a textbook for 55,000 high school students in which page after page denies Judaism's historical connection to the land of Israel and describes Zionism as racism. Textbooks should be for education, but Hamas uses them for provocation, indoctrination and escalation.

These are just the most recent examples of the incitement targeting the next generation. Terrorism does not begin with an attack on a bus or in a pizza parlor. It begins in classrooms, mosques, and day camps where Palestinian children are being taught prejudice instead of peace; terror instead of tolerance; and martyrdom instead of mutual understanding.

This incitement is having deadly consequences. Between 2011 and 2012, the number of Palestinian terror attacks against Israel doubled. So far in 2013, there have been 1,163 terror attacks against Israelis and dozens of attempted kidnappings.

Just over a week ago, Eden Atias, a 19-year-old Israeli soldier, was stabbed to death while sleeping on a passenger bus. Eden was the latest victim of the escalating terror attacks against Israelis. In September, 20 year-old Tomer Hazan was murdered, two soldiers were injured in an attack near Nablus, and a 9-year-old girl was stabbed while playing in her front yard. In October, four Israeli civilians were injured in a stabbing attack and Sraya Ofer was brutally beaten to death outside his home in the Jordan Rift Valley.

All those who claim to advance peace must remind the Palestinians that there are no shortcuts. Peace is not achieved by changing your nameplate at the UN; it isn’t achieved by unilateral actions or by passing a string of anti-Israel resolutions; and it won’t be
achieved in Manhattan, mid-town east, but rather in the Middle East. So long as the Palestinian leadership chooses symbolism over pragmatism, it will be harder to achieve peace.

Mr. President,

In a few days, on November 29, the United Nations will recognize the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Let me take a moment to remind this Assembly what really occurred on this day in history. On November 29 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181, which came to be known as the Partition Plan. This resolution provided for the establishment of a Jewish state and an Arab state.

The Jews accepted huge compromises and gave up on dreams the Jewish people had carried for generations. But they welcomed the plan and joyously declared a new state in their ancient homeland. Chaim Weizmann, who later became the first president of the State of Israel, proclaimed: “It is now our primary task to establish relations of peace and harmony with our Arab neighbors.”

Rather than accept the partition plan, five surrounding Arab nations declared war on the newborn Jewish state. Their intentions were made clear by Azzam Pasha, Secretary-General of the Arab League, who said: “It will be a war of annihilation. It will be a momentous massacre in history that will be talked about like the massacres of the Mongols or the Crusades.”

The Arabs not only rejected the UN offer of a Palestinian state, they then declared war against the Jewish state. Since losing this war, the Arabs have perpetuated the Palestinian refugee problem and still have the audacity to demand solidarity.

Broadway may be down the street, but the real theater is here at the United Nations. In these halls, the Arab nations shine a spotlight on the Palestinian refugees, but back home in the Middle East, leave them in the dark. Since 1948, the Arab states refused to accept the Palestinian refugees into their societies, confined them to refugee camps, and passed discriminatory laws.

Mr. President,

General Assembly resolution 181 passed in 1947 speaks of the creation of a “Jewish State” no fewer than 25 times. And yet today, 66 years later, have you heard Palestinian leaders utter the term ‘Jewish state’? Of course not.

Palestinian leaders call for an independent Palestinian state, but they insist that the Palestinian people return to the Jewish state. This is a euphemism for the destruction of the State of Israel and the single greatest hurdle to peace.

Israel is the ancient homeland of the Jewish people. It is the birthplace of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the land where Moses and Joshua led the Jewish people and King Solomon built the Jewish Temple.
Israel is the place where the bible tells us about David, who was made king and laid the cornerstone for his palace in Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the Jewish people. That is King David from Jueda, not King David from the ‘West Bank’ – and certainly not King David from the so-called ‘occupied territories.’ After all, you can’t ‘occupy’ your own home.

For thousands of years, Jerusalem served as the capital of the Jewish people - unclaimed by any other people until a few decades ago. Three thousand years ago, my ancestors walked the same streets that my children walk, spoke the same language that I speak, and pray in the very same places that millions of Jews pray every single day.

Yet all of these historical facts are brushed aside. Instead, in this Assembly all we hear are rants, rhetoric and biased resolutions. It doesn’t take a fortuneteller to predict the language in these resolutions. After all, the same text is copied and pasted each year - much of it dating back five decades. Yet country after country sees no problem in standing up and parroting propaganda. I’m reminded of President John F. Kennedy who said, “No matter how big the propaganda; repeat it often enough and the masses will regard it as the truth.”

The resolutions being voted on today have no relationship to the facts on the ground. Just last week the UN adopted nine resolutions condemning Israel. One of these resolutions condemned Israel’s treatment of the Syrian people. Condemned Israel’s treatment of the Syrian people? It is inconceivable that while Israeli hospitals are treating the Syrians who escaped Assad’s massacre; the UN is denouncing Israel’s treatment of the Syrians.

If that weren’t enough, the GA will soon vote on another resolution calling on Israel to hand over the Golan Heights and its residents to Syria. It is nothing short of absurd for the UN to demand that even more civilians be subject to Assad’s brutality.

At the United Nations, there are countless resolutions that delegitimize and demonize Israel. Why don’t I ever hear anyone speak about all the good work Israel is doing for the Palestinians?

While the Palestinians are busy condemning Israel at the UN, Israel is busy supporting the Palestinian economy and developing their infrastructure. Today, more than 100,000 Palestinians earn their living in Israel, making up more than 10% of the Palestinian GDP. Israel is also building four electrical substations and providing more than 1,400 million gallons of water annually.

Palestinians receive world-class healthcare services in hospitals throughout the country. In the first half of 2013 alone, more than 94,000 Palestinians received treatment in Israeli hospitals.

And we continue to give, even as our goodwill is knowingly exploited. While the IDF uncovers one terror tunnel after another, the flow of consumer goods continues into Gaza
uninterrupted. Each day, the state of Israel delivers 400 truckloads to the Palestinian people via the Keren Shalom Terminal.

Mr. President,

George Orwell said, “In a time of universal deceit - telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”

The truth is that Israel is not just speaking about peace; it is demonstrating its commitment every single day. Peace is a central value of Israeli society and it has been the goal of the Israeli people and every Israeli leader since our state was re-established 65 years ago.

We will not be deterred from this goal. Israel has always extended its hand for peace and it will continue to do so for our children and grandchildren. When we faced an Arab leader who wanted peace, we made peace. That was the case with Egypt and that was the case with Jordan. We are committed to negotiating with our Palestinian neighbors so that our two peoples can live side by side in peace, dignity and freedom.

I call on my colleagues in this Hall not to be distracted by unilateral efforts and biased resolutions. Remind the Palestinians to take responsibility and that the only way to reach a comprehensive peace deal is through hard work and direct negotiations.

Working together, we can make history by making peace. Working together, we can author a better future - one where our people can live in security, free from violence; where the horizon is bright with opportunity; and, where our children can live side by side in peace.

Thank you, Mr. President.