



The United States proposed a UN General Assembly resolution condemning Hamas and other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip

December 6, 2018

Overview

On November 30, 2018, the United States Mission to the United Nations proposed a resolution calling for the condemnation of Hamas for its terrorist activities in the Gaza Strip. According to the proposed resolution, Hamas is to be condemned for its repeated firing of rockets into Israel, inciting violence and putting civilians at risk, and using airborne incendiary devices [such as kites and balloons]. The resolution condemns Hamas for using resources that could be used for the critical needs of the civilian population to construct its military infrastructure, including tunnels to infiltrate Israel and equipment to launch rockets into civilian areas (United States Mission to the UN website, November 28, 2018). The proposed resolution included the Palestinian Islamic Jihad as well as other "militant" organizations (i.e., other terrorist organizations). It also included a demand to end "provocative actions and violent activity" [i.e., popular terrorism].¹

► **The resolution came to a vote on December 6, 2018.** It received the support of all the EU member states. The vote was 87 in favor (ten short of the required number), 57 against, with 33 abstentions. **The resolution failed to pass** because a two-thirds vote was necessary, according to the Kuwaiti proposal. If the resolution had been adopted, it would have been the first time the UN General Assembly had condemned Hamas.

► **The publication of the proposed resolution led to a wave of condemnation from Hamas and the Palestinian Authority (PA), Fatah and the PLO.** The Palestinians began making international contacts in an effort to sabotage the resolution by making accusations against the United States. Fatah and the PA came to Hamas' aid in undermining the

¹ Popular terrorism ("popular resistance") activities in the Gaza Strip include mainly the "return marches" which have been held every Friday since March 30, 2018. While the demonstrations are represented to the international community as non-violent, they are actually **violent riots in which Palestinians try to break through the security fence and enter Israeli territory, violating its sovereignty, fire light arms at IDF soldiers, launch incendiary kites and balloons, place IEDs on the fence, and attacked at IDF soldiers, under the cover the "return march" demonstrations.** On a number of occasions rockets and mortar shells have been fired at the western Negev, to an extent unprecedented since Operation Protective Edge.

resolution. According to **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, the Palestinian leadership participates in the "existential war" being waged in the UN to prevent a resolution designating Hamas as a terrorist organization from being passed. He claimed **Hamas is a Palestinian movement whether the PLO agrees with its opinions or not, therefore the PLO will not allow any Palestinian organization to be designated as terrorist** (Dunia al-Watan, December 2, 2018).

The Terms of the Resolution and the Chances of Its Being Passed

► On November 30, 2018, the United States Mission to the UN, headed by Nikki Haley, who will soon end her role as American ambassador to the UN, published the proposal for a resolution to condemn the "militant activities" of Hamas and the exploitation of aid it receives. She said, "The UN has the chance to condemn Hamas for the first time. If it fails to do so, its lack of credibility will speak for itself" (Nikki Haley's Twitter account). The proposal had seven articles (Website of the US Mission to the UN, November 30, 2018):

- ◆ A condemnation of Hamas for repeatedly firing rockets into Israel and putting civilians at risk;
- ◆ A demand that Hamas and other "militant actors" including the Palestinian Islamic Jihad cease all provocations and violence, including by using "airborne incendiary devices;"
- ◆ A condemnation of the use of [civilian] resources by Hamas to construct military infrastructure, including tunnels to infiltrate Israel and equipment to launch rockets into civilian areas, when such resources could be used to address the critical needs of the civilian population;
- ◆ A call for full respect by all parties for international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including in regards to the protection of the civilian population;
- ◆ A call for the cessation of all forms of violence and intimidation directed against medical and humanitarian personnel;
- ◆ Encouragement for tangible steps towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation, including in support of the mediation efforts of Egypt, and concrete steps to reunite the Gaza

Strip and the West Bank **under the Palestinian Authority** and ensure its effective functioning in the Gaza Strip [ITIC emphasis]; and

◆A call for further engagement by the Secretary-General and the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to assist, in cooperation with concerned partners, in the efforts to de-escalate the situation and address urgent infrastructure, humanitarian, and economic development needs



**The beginning of the proposed resolution
(website of the US Mission to the UN, November 30, 2018).**

► **The proposed American resolution received the support of all 28 European Union member states.** The United States waged an extensive campaign among UN members in the hope of having the resolution passed. **Jason Greenblatt, special American envoy to the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations,** appealed to a number of states, including the UAE, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain and Oman to vote in favor. **He criticized the PA for its defense of Hamas,** and asked the aforementioned states to convince the PA not to interfere in America's efforts to enlist votes for the resolution (Jason Greenblatt's Twitter account).

Reactions to the Proposed American Resolution

The Palestinian Authority and Fatah

Despite the rift between Hamas and the Fatah and PA, the PA enlisted to try to undermine the resolution. Most of the efforts were carried out by Riyadh Mansour, the Palestinian delegate to the UN. Initially, he succeeded in moving the date of the vote from December 2 to December 6, 2018. Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of the Hamas political bureau, praised him for his efforts, saying Fatah's position on the resolution was responsible and showed the Palestinians' national unity (Musa Abu Marzouq's Twitter account, December 2, 2018).



Fatah protects Hamas from the American resolution to condemn it (Isma'il al-Bazam's Facebook page, December 2, 2018).

► The following are statements by Fatah and the PLO about enlisting to aid Hamas:

- ◆ **Saeb Erekat, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, said **the Palestinian leadership participates in the "existential war" being waged in the UN** to prevent a resolution designating Hamas as a terrorist organization from being passed. . He claimed **Hamas is a Palestinian movement whether the PLO agrees with its opinions or not, therefore the PLO will not allow any Palestinian organization to be designated as terrorist** (Dunia al-Watan, December 2, 2018)
- ◆ **Ahmed Majdalani, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee**, said the PA was working to prevent the resolution from being passed. He said despite the differences of opinion between the Committee and Hamas, **the PA would not let such a resolution**

being passed because Hamas was a main component of the Palestinian nation (Palestinian TV, December 2, 2018).

◆ **Fatah spokesman 'Atef Abu Seif** condemned the proposed resolution, claiming its objective was to harm the rights of the Palestinian people. He added that Israel and its leadership had to be condemned. He stressed that the Palestinian people had to unite in the campaign, as they unite in every campaign threatening the Palestinian cause (Dunia al-Watan, December 3, 2018).

Intensive diplomatic activity carried out by Hamas and other institutions

► In the face of the American move, **Hamas began intensive diplomatic activity to thwart it. Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, appealed to regional leaders and senior figures. They included **Ahmed Abu Ghait**, secretary general of the Arab League, and with those responsible for the "Palestinian portfolio" in **Egyptian General Intelligence**, who explained the role of the Egyptian foreign ministry in the matter. Haniyeh also spoke by phone with the Qatari foreign minister (Hamas website, December 2, 2018).

► **Haniyeh also sent communiqués to a number of world leaders.** He wrote to the **president of the UN General Assembly** that Hamas was "a Palestinian national liberation movement" seeking to defend its people in every way until they had achieved elementary rights. He claimed everything Hamas did was within a framework of "legitimate defense and repelling aggression against the Palestinian people" (Hamas website, November 28, 2018). He also denounced the efforts of the Americans who, he claimed, had adopted the Israeli narrative of the conflict. He claimed the American effort supported Israel ("the occupation"), and demanded condemnation of Israel, which operated as "an entity above the law." He stressed the right of the Palestinian people to defend itself in every way, **including taking armed measures** (i.e., military terrorism) which, he claimed, was authorized by international law (Hamas website, December 2, 2018).

► **Ahmed Bahar, representing Hamas as deputy chairman of the Legislative Council**, sent urgent appeals to **the UN secretary general, the president of the General Assembly, the heads of European parliaments and the secretary general of the Arab League.** He condemned the proposed American resolution which, he claimed, reflected America's "racist, fascist policy." He demanded action from countries and international institutions be taken using every possible political and diplomatic measure to keep the resolution from being

passed. He said the Palestinian people had to be provided with a legal, diplomatic and political defense network to protect them from the Israel's [so-called] "crimes" (Dunia al-Watan TV, December 3, 2018).

► **Hamas also worked to enlist the aid of Iran.** Isma'il Haniyeh held a telephone conversation with **Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Iranian foreign minister**, regarding the attempts of the United States to propose the resolution and asked Iran to prevent it. Zarif promised that Iran would make a diplomatic effort in coordination with other Islamic states to prevent the passage of the resolution which, he claimed, violated the UN charter (YJC News Agency, Iran, December 3, 2018).

► Senior Hamas and PIJ figures were severely critical of the American move. Some of their responses were the following:

◆ **Izzat al-Rishq, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said Hamas would work extensively with the leaders of the Arab countries, international leaders and the UN secretary general to prevent the passage American resolution, which condemns the "resistance" (Palinfo Twitter account, December 2, 2018).

◆ **Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri** said the international community was facing a real test, because it had to keep the American leadership from violating international law. He added that the objective of the American plan was to distort the truth (Sami Abu Zuhri's Twitter account, December 3, 2018).

◆ **Khaled al-Batash, a member of the PIJ's political bureau**, condemned the attempt made by the American administration to have the "resistance" considered a terrorist organization. He said that now they were in a difficult campaign facing the international community (Dunia al-Watan, December 1, 2018).