

Testimony
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U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and
International Organizations

Israel, the Palestinians, and the United Nations: Challenges for the
New Administration

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Chairs Ros-Lehtinen and Smith, Ranking Members Deutch and Bass, Members of the
Subcommittees.

It is undeniable that the United Nations has demonstrated a systematic obsession with
unjust criticism of Israel and an institutional anti-Israel bias for decades.

During its 2015-16 session, the UN General Assembly passed 20 resolutions targeting
Israel—more than all other countries combined.

The damaging legacy of GA Resolution 3379, Zionism is Racism—passed in 1975 and
rescinded in 1991—is a network of well-funded UN structures committed to the
delegitimization of Israel and boycott, divestment and sanction efforts.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is the UN
structure most responsible for the political, economic and diplomatic assault against Israel.
Also, standing Item 7 of the Human Rights Council irrationally discriminates against Israel
and is a poorly disguised mechanism to discredit the Jewish state. The historically
unfounded collective efforts of UNRWA and UNESCO denying the Jewish character of Israel
contribute to Palestinian obstinance and encourage their unrealistic demand for a full right
of return.

Congress and the administration should work with Secretary General Guterres—who is
sensitive to our concerns—to dismantle the anti-Israel UN infrastructure and repeal Item 7
or lead boycotts against it. Defunding UNRWA would be counterproductive because Israel
and Jordan would bear the additional burden.

For the benefit of Israel, Palestinians and credibility of the UN, Congress should exercise its
leverage to reform the problematic UN infrastructure reflecting a renewed international
commitment to a negotiated two-state outcome focused on building Palestinian institutions
and economic growth.

Any successful strategy must take into account promising regional developments. Prime Minister Netanyahu has long maintained that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict results from competing historical narratives. Israeli Defense Minister Liberman advocates for a regional approach to peace making. Both men are correct and the positive responses of the Sunni-Arab states to former Secretary of State Kerry's final address on Middle East peace demonstrate the new regional dynamic. Paramount among Kerry's six principles was the vision of GA Resolution 181 calling for the establishment of two states for two peoples—one Jewish, one Arab—with mutual recognition and equal rights for all citizens.

The positive reaction to the principle of "two states for two peoples" by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar and Turkey, among others, opens the door to reconciliation of the competing historical narratives that Prime Minister Netanyahu speaks of.

I just visited Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov and others in Moscow. We share certain common objectives with Russia on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, as we do our European allies. In fact, if reformed, the UN committees and Middle East Quartet can be instrumental in helping the Israelis and Palestinians forge an international consensus based on a regional strategy that ends the conflict; guarantees a Jewish majority, democratic State of Israel that is secure; and implements the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people in their own state. By genuinely promoting a negotiated two-state outcome, the UN would isolate Iran and Israel's enemies that reject Israel's right to exist.

The Obama administration's recent abstention on Resolution 2334 was, in my view, a clumsy attempt to restate America's long standing bipartisan policy of opposing unilateral steps by any party, including settlement building east of the 1967 lines. Please, though, we should not practice selective memory. Every US administration since 1967 has, at times, abstained from or cast votes critical of Israeli policy at the UN: President Johnson 7 votes; Nixon 15; Ford 2; Carter 14; Reagan 21; H. W. Bush 9; Clinton 3; W. Bush 6; Obama 1.

President Trump recently referred to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the "ultimate deal". His characterization is correct. Without a resolution, however, the Zionist dream is endangered and Israel will likely end up a binational state—half Jewish, half Arab. Don't let that happen on our watch.