

# Donald Trump Must Not Join the Jackals

by Michael Curtis



In his biting article in *Commentary* February 1, 1981, Daniel P. Moynihan, former US Ambassador to the United Nations, 1975-76, was critical of his successor Donald F. McHenry for not voting against a UN Security Council Resolution strongly critical of Israel. The United States had “Joined the Jackals.” Moynihan remarked that for the US to abstain on a UNSC resolution concerning Israel was the equivalent of acquiescing in it.

Thirty-five years later, with the abstention of the US in allowing UNSC Resolution 2334 to pass, the question must be posed. Has the Obama administration in its final days joined the Jackals?

One of more difficult, if deplorable, questions to answer

correctly today is which of the organization of the United Nations is the most damaging and perverse? The UN General Assembly in 2016 adopted 19 resolutions critical of Israel, and only 9 others critical of the rest of the world. The Human Rights Council (UNHRC) adopted 12 specific resolutions pertaining to Israel. The 2017 membership of UNHRC which “upholds the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights,” includes Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Cuba, Iraq, and Qatar.

On December 23, 2016 the Security Council adopted by 14-0 and one abstention (the United States), Resolution 2334 that strongly condemned Israeli settlement construction.

Throughout his presidency Obama has always wanted to “put daylight” between the United States and Israel, a policy approximating that of the lack of empathy of the international left and its continuing animosity to the Jewish state, and the Israeli government headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Obama’s decision was not only a denial of US policy. It was also intellectually inexplicable to understand why the US President would allow such a biting, one-sided resolution to pass. Obama’s action may be attributed to personal pique and animus against both his adversary Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for his opposition to the Iran nuclear deal and to the state of Israel. The *Wall Street Journal* regarded it as an anti-Israeli tantrum. Was it déjà vu all over again? Senator Chuck Schumer said it was like the infamous 1975 resolution that “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination” all over again. Or did US career diplomats influence the president? If so, one of the many tasks of President Trump is to drain the swamp of the US State Department.

Even Samantha Power, the US Ambassador to the UN confessed she did not agree with every word in the Resolution. As a prelude to her partly disingenuous speech explaining U.S. abstention,

she spoke about the double standard, the different treatment of Israel from all other nations at the UN. The truth is that resolutions critical of the ongoing savage bombardment of civilians, hospitals, by countries other than Israel are in line to be passed but never are. Nevertheless, she defended the US abstention because the Resolution she said reflected facts on the ground. She argued that Israeli settlements that are not legal were “accelerating” and must stop.

A somewhat more midway position was taken by British PM Theresa May who voted in favor of the Resolution, because the construction of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories was illegal. At the same time, she commented on, and was critical of the speech on December 28, 2016, of US Secretary of State John Kerry, for singling out the issue of Israeli settlements. May urged that the way to make peace is not to focus on only one issue, the construction of settlements, in a complex situation. Nor was it appropriate to attack the composition of the democratically elected government of an ally, Israel. The people of Israel deserve to live free from the threat of terrorism with which they have had to cope for too long.

The line for support of 2334 stretched around the world. It was introduced by New Zealand, and was approved by the members, including Britain, France, Britain, China, Russia, and Japan while the US abstained.

Israel is familiar with UN condemnations, but rarely with US abstentions on critical resolutions against it, such as President Jimmy Carter’s action in March 1980 regarding Resolution 465. The US has rejected Israel’s claim to the Golan Heights and has allowed resolutions that condemn occupation of that area as a violation of international law. But there is a crucial difference between Resolutions 465 and 2334. In 1980 there was no tacit US-Israeli agreement, as there has been, that the US would automatically veto anti-Israeli Resolutions relating to issues that will be on the

agenda for a peace arrangement. Resolution 2334 in 2016 imposed a solution.

Indeed, 2334 goes further. It states that the establishment of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law, and is a major obstacle to achievement of a two state solution. It demands Israel cease, immediately and completely, all settlement activities in that territory. The UNSC does not recognize any changes to the June 4, 1967 lines, including Jerusalem, other than those agreed to by the parties through negotiations.

Logically, since the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall in Jerusalem were captured from the Jordanian occupiers in 1967, the UNSC considers them illegal. Therefore 2334 does not distinguish between the territory of the state of Israel, and other territory. Moreover, 2334 neglects the vital fact that Israel is the only existing legal inheritor of the British Mandate. It was the Palestinian and Arab countries who rejected the partition resolution UN General Assembly 181. It was Jordan that held the disputed areas until 1967, and its proclaimed annexation of the territories was recognized only by UK and Pakistan.

The Resolution 2334 was passed under chapter 6, not chapter 7 of the UN Charter, and thus cannot be forced on Israel. It does not make law, but is a recommendation. But it is an obstacle to the required objective, peaceful negotiations of final status arrangements because it bypasses the necessary negotiating process. It is unhelpful because it is eager to make policy, such as holding the status quo about Israel-Palestine is not sustainable. The Resolution implies that Israel has no claim to any of the territories occupied since 1967. However, it ignores international agreements. The Oslo Accords make no reference to "1967 lines," and so the Resolution 2334 prejudices the outcome of any negotiations.

Donald Trump has called for moving of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and has indicated some support for settlements. He is aware that Netanyahu has been making friendly relations around the world, most recently with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Acting as a result of the Resolution, Netanyahu cut off \$8 million in contributions to five UN agencies. He ordered Israeli ambassadors in New Zealand and Senegal to return home, cut off all aid programs to Senegal, and cancelled the visit of the prime minister of Ukraine.

Trump has asserted that things at the UN will be different after January 20, 2016. He must ensure that the United States never again join the Jackals regarding Israel as on all other matters.