

Ending the Biased United Nations Resolutions against Israel

by Michael Curtis



Another opening, another show. International politics has taken its cue from Cole Porter. Not far from Broadway, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is due to meet on January 18, 2017 to reiterate its favorite topic, condemnation of the State of Israel. It follows the ministerial meeting in Paris of January 15, 2017 that ended as expected with a declaration, unanimous with the exception of UK, to reaffirm the Palestinian right to statehood and sovereignty, and “end the occupation that began in 1967.”

The Paris conference welcomed UNSC Resolution 2334 of December 23, 2016 that condemned Israeli settlement activity, and all (unspecified) acts of violence and terror. It called for financial support for the Palestinian Authority, and for strengthening support for Palestinian steps to “exercise their

responsibilities of statehood." The Resolution, to put it mildly, was unhelpful to peace. The following day, Palestinian Fatah posted a cartoon praising it by showing a dagger in the shape of a map of the whole of Israel colored with the Palestinian flag. Under the dagger was pool of blood.

There was a noticeable and significant difference between 2334 and the declaration of the Paris conference. Resolution 2334 spoke of "a region where two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, live side by side." In Paris, the phrase "democratic states" disappeared from the declaration. That declaration imposed no new obligations on Israel but it does allow Palestinians to avoid direct negotiations. To its credit UK refused to sign the Paris document.

The UN, and indeed all nations and groups interested in the issue, should recall the Armistice Agreements signed in Rhodes on February 24, 1949, that ended the war between Israel and Arab states that had initiated the war by invading the newly created State of Israel. The Agreement with Jordan was signed on April 3, 1949. It reads in part, "no provision of this Agreement shall in any way prejudice the rights, claims, and positions of either Party hereto in the ultimate peaceful settlement of the Palestine question, the provisions of this Agreement being dictated exclusively by military considerations."

The Agreements laid down armistice lines, generally known as the Green Line. For the most part the line was akin to the 1922 international border between Egypt and Mandatory Palestine, except that Egypt controlled the area known as the Gaza Strip. It was understood that the armistice line was not a political or territorial boundary.

It should be remembered that at that time no Arab country recognized the legitimacy of the State of Israel, nor accepted the armistice "lines" as any kind of territorial border. Jordan ruled and "annexed" the West Bank, including east

Jerusalem and the Old City, after 1949. Thus, the "West Bank" (of Jordan) was created by the 1949 Arrangement. In 1988 Jordan improperly, from a legal point of view, "gave" the area to the Palestinians. In view of this historical background it is ironic the UNSC is said to be likely to propose recognition of a state of "Palestine" with "borders" corresponding to the 1949 armistice lines.

There are two problems with this UN determination to defy international agreements on its partial path to a two state solution. The first is the seeming inability of Palestinian authorities to organize a political structure. The other is the narrow focus of the UN on Israel, disregarding the violations, political and humanitarian, of almost all other states.

Palestinian activity towards Israel is marked by lack of peaceful intentions. Just looking at the record in 2016, Palestinians between January and October killed more than 11 Israelis and injured 131 including 46 security officers. Israel security forces in retaliation killed 94 Palestinians and injured 3300 in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel in the same period.

According to Human Rights Watch , Palestinian armed groups continue to launch rockets from Gaza into Israel, violating the laws of war. Hamas which runs Gaza has never prosecuted anyone, or been prosecuted, for crimes committed during the 2014 hostilities in Gaza.

Areas controlled by Palestinians are not democratic. Palestinians have restricted freedom of expression, tortured and badly treated detainees, and, in Gaza, executed a number of their own people. They have arrested activists for political criticism, for peaceful speech. According to the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), activists who criticized their leaders or policies were tortured and treated brutally.

International organizations say little or anything about the need for these abuses to be rectified before a Palestinian political entity can be created. Similarly, one might logically expect that organizations genuinely interested in dealing with abuses of human rights should be concerned with their elimination. Considering the unending onslaught on Israel for its alleged deficiencies, it is worth comparing that democratic country with just two other Middle East countries.

Again according to Human Rights Watch, in Iran a disturbing policy has been the brutal actions by the security apparatus, reinforced by the judiciary, in putting down attempts of citizens to exercise their rights. In the first months of 2016, certainly more than 200 and possibly over 400, have been executed. Non-violent "crimes" such as insulting the Prophet, apostasy, adultery, same sex relations, drug offenses, are punishable by death.

Individuals, who are really Sunni Kurds, have been arrested on charges of "enmity against God", and sentenced to death. Children continue to be executed, and flogging is still a punishment for youngsters.

Nor is Saudi Arabia, now the major enemy of Iran, a bastion of human rights. In operations against the Houthis in Yemen, Saudi Arabia has committed many violations of international humanitarian law, killing more than 4,000 civilians and wounding 7,200, some by cluster bombs. In actions, they have struck civilian homes, markets, hospitals, factories, warehouses, and mosques.

Saudi Arabia represses dissenters and human rights activists engaged in peaceful activity. Comments in public statements or on social media, are punished. Bloggers and journalists have been sent to prison for supporting the right of women to drive. Some have even been flogged.

A significant task for the incoming Trump administration is to attempt to redirect the energies and priorities of international organizations. This will mean the end of the interminable biased resolutions against the State of Israel. That will bring peace to at least part of the Middle East.