



UN Resolution on Israeli Settlements Prompts Mixed Reactions

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334, adopted on December 23 by a 14-0 vote (with the United States abstaining) — which described Israeli settlements in occupied areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem as a “flagrant violation” of international law — was met with largely favorable reactions from European nations and Amnesty International. However, President-elect Donald Trump tweeted after the vote: “as to the UN, things will be different after Jan. 20.”



As might be expected, the response from Israel was negative. “Israel rejects the anti-Israel resolution at the United Nations,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said in a statement the evening of its passage. The statement called the UN vote “shameful” and stated that Israel would not abide by it.

“The Obama administration not only failed to protect Israel against the UN’s obsession with Israel, it collaborated with the UN behind Israel’s back,” the statement continued.

“Israel looks forward to working with President-elect Trump and with all our friends in Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, to negate the harmful effects of this absurd resolution.”

Netanyahu summoned U.S. ambassador to Israel Daniel Shapiro on December 25 to protest the Obama administration’s failure to veto the anti-settlement resolution, thereby allowing it to pass.

“Acts such as these hinder peace and [do] not promote it. That was the message,” an Israeli official told the *Wall Street Journal*.

Israel’s government also accused the United States of helping to orchestrate the passage of the resolution.

“We have rather ironclad information from sources in both the Arab world and internationally that this was a deliberate push by the United States and in fact they helped create the resolution in the first place,” Netanyahu spokesman David Keyes said on Fox News’ *America’s News HQ* on December 25.

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This accusation was denied by White House spokesman Eric Schultz, who issued a statement the same day defending President Obama’s support for Israel. “The US did not draft this resolution nor did the US introduce this resolution,” Schultz said. “The Egyptians, in partnership with the Palestinians, are the ones who began circulating an earlier draft of the resolution. The Egyptians are the ones who moved it forward on Friday. And we took the position that we did when it was put to a vote.”

Resolution 2334:

[Condemns] all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, including, inter alia, the



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construction and expansion of settlements, transfer of Israeli settlers, confiscation of land, demolition of homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions, and

[Expresses] grave concern that continuing Israeli settlement activities are dangerously imperiling the viability of the two-State solution based on the 1967 lines...

Reaffirms that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

While those provisions are critical of Israel, it includes a condemnation of “all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation, incitement and destruction,” which can also be applied toward terrorists affiliated with the confederated multi-party Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), such as the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP).

Though an adverse reaction to the UN resolution in Israel was to be expected, an opinion piece published in Israel’s oldest daily newspaper, *Haaretz*, on December 26, actually welcomed the resolution. The article said, in part:

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu can call back his ambassadors, while his right-hand minister Yuval Steinitz can shriek that the resolution is “unfair.” (He has a sense of humor.) And opposition leader Isaac Herzog can babble that “we need to fight the decision with all means.” But there isn’t a person in the world with a conscience who won’t rejoice over the resolution.

The article went on to explain why it welcomed the resolution:

This decision has brought Israel back to the solid ground of reality. All the settlements, including in the territories that have been annexed, including in East Jerusalem of course, are a violation of international law. In other words, they are a crime. No country in the world thinks otherwise. The entire world thinks so — all Israel’s so-called friends and all its so-called enemies — unanimously.

The *Haaretz* article provided no indication of how widely accepted the views expressed are in Israel. Given Netanyahu’s statements, however, it can be assumed they are a minority opinion.

A key area of disagreement between Israel and the Palestinians centers around the construction of settlements in West Bank territory that Israel seized during the 1967 war, as well as Jewish construction in predominantly Arab East Jerusalem. Palestinians say they intend to create their future independent state largely on the West Bank, with East Jerusalem as its capital. This latest UN Security Council resolution will have the effect of adding strength to Palestinian objections to Israel’s West Bank settlements.

While the aspirations of the indigent Palestinian population to build their own independent state seem quite legitimate, their cause was unfortunately harmed severely when the radically violent PLO took control of the Palestinian territories on the West Bank. Eventually the PLO appeared to have moderated, and in 1993 recognized Israel’s right to exist in peace, accepted UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 (advocating the cessation of hostilities), and rejected “violence and terrorism.”

In response, Israel officially recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. On November 29, 2012, the UN General Assembly passed resolution 67/19, upgrading Palestine from an “observer entity” to a “non-member observer state” at the UN.



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President Obama has referred to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas as a “moderate” leader “committed to nonviolence and diplomatic efforts to resolve this [conflict].”

As a young man, Abbas engaged in graduate studies at Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow, then the USSR. He was recruited in 1961 to become a member of Fatah, the largest faction of the PLO founded by Yasser Arafat and five other Palestinians in Kuwait in the late 1950s. As Abbas is currently the president of both Fatah and the PLO.

On March 19, 2003, as a natural consequence of the United States and Israel refusing to negotiate with PLO founder Yasser Arafat because of his terrorist history, Arafat appointed Abbas as prime minister of the PLO.

After Arafat’s death, Abbas was seen, at least by Fatah, as his natural successor. On November 25, 2004, Fatah’s Revolutionary Council endorsed Abbas as its preferred candidate for the PLO presidency. On January 9, 2005, Abbas was elected with 62 percent of the vote and was sworn in on January 15.

The Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority government, run by Abbas, is generally more willing to work with Israel and the West than the overt terrorists who control the violent Hamas faction of the PLO.

Though Israel’s incursions into the West Bank are opposed by the UN and most member states, the terrorist history and background of the Palestinian Authority’s leadership makes this dispute one in which there are no easy solutions.

The situation is especially difficult for Palestinian Christians, who make up only six percent of the population of the Palestinian-controlled area. As a tiny religious minority, they face challenges in practicing their faith or finding employment in the Muslim-dominated country. And Israeli security measures and border controls, put in place to protect Israeli citizens from attacks from Palestinian terrorists, make it difficult or next to impossible for Palestinian Christians to cross the border into Israel for employment.

Many Palestinian people — Muslim and Christian alike — were displaced from their homelands following the creation of Israel in 1948 and have suffered much economic hardship. However, before successful negotiations to establish a homeland for these people can be established, Palestinians must be governed by moderate individuals who can coexist alongside Israel as a peaceful and prosperous neighbor.

Mahmoud Abbas, because of his past PLO association with the radical Yasser Arafat, lacks sufficient credibility with the West to fulfill that role. If the Palestinians are serious about establishing a sovereign state, they must find leadership that is non-threatening to Israel, and then serious negotiations can begin.

Some people believe that when Trump take office, he will initiate a stronger pro-Israel foreign policy and use that influence at the UN — perhaps to veto resolutions such as 2334. However, given the UN’s track record, which has often been as anti-America as it is anti-Israel, Trump would do better to begin the process of withdrawing the United States from the UN entirely.



Photo of UN Security Council voting on Resolution 2334: AP Images



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