



General Assembly

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Sixty-second General Assembly

Third Committee

49th and 50th Meeting (AM)

THIRD COMMITTEE APPROVES THREE COUNTRY-SPECIFIC TEXTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

DESPITE OPPOSITION LED BY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Background

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) met today to take action on a number of draft resolutions.

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According to a draft resolution on The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (document [A/C.3/62/L.63](#)), the General Assembly would express the urgent need for the resumption of negotiations within the Middle East peace process and reaffirm the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to their independent State of Palestine. It would also urge all States and the United Nations to continue to support and assist the Palestinian people in the early realization of their right to self-determination.

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Action on Draft Resolutions

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Turning next to the draft resolution, on The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (document [A/C.3/62/L.63](#)), the representative of Egypt noted that 117 countries had co-sponsored the text. That growing number reflected the importance attached to helping the Palestinian people realize their aspirations to break free from occupation and to attain their inalienable right to self-determination. It was an unequivocal signal of support and solidarity at a time of need.

He hoped there would be larger United Nations engagement in resolving the issue in a serious manner, through its involvement in the Quartet and other confidence-building measures. Stronger engagement by the Organization would be in keeping with the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the approaching end of the Second International Decade on the Eradication of Colonialism. Approving the text by consensus would be a good first step towards helping the Palestinian people establish an independent, sovereign State on their own land, alongside Israel, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The representative of Israel then requested a recorded vote, and, in a general statement before action, said her country recognized the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, but, in turn, expected the Palestinians to respect the Israeli right to live in peace and security. In addition, Israel had long promoted the two-State vision; the international agreements that Israel had signed with the Palestinians showed that will was there. The inability of the Palestinian people to achieve statehood was not due to her country's lack of will, but to the Palestinians' own lack of will to recognize that security was a prerequisite to their statehood. In fact, the Road Map obliged the Palestinians to fight terror and incitement, and dialogue could only take place after that provision was fulfilled.

She said the Road Map and other agreements were unequivocal in determining that both parties had rights and responsibilities. The current resolution, and others like it, affirmed Palestinian rights but made no demands on them to fulfil their responsibilities, such as denouncing terrorism. Israel would not tolerate a State that allowed terrorism on its border. Since stagnation and inaction was not in Israel's interest, it would continue to meet with the Palestinian leadership to launch the upcoming Annapolis dialogue, which would enable the culmination of the two-State vision. But Israel would vote against the present text.

The representative of the United States said his country had worked continuously to support the socio-economic development, as well as the legitimate political aspirations, of the Palestinian people. The level of United States assistance to address the needs of Palestinian people compared favourably with aid given to other parts of world.

The United States' objective was two sovereign and democratic States, living side by side in peace and security. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas was committed to those principles and his platform for peace. The United States, however, could not support the current resolution because it and others like it reflected an outdated approach, conceived when the Palestinian people thought that a solution lay solely in the United Nations.

He said there was indeed a role for the United Nations: to support the two parties as they worked with each other, within the context of the Quartet. The present resolution, however, undermined the Organization's credibility. Both sides must see the United Nations as an honest broker. One-sided resolutions such as the current one did nothing to resolve the issue.

The representative of Australia said that while she supported a peaceful negotiated settlement between Israel and Palestine, based on a two-State solution, she would abstain from the vote, since the resolution contained unbalanced language that would do nothing to assist in resolving the dispute.

The Committee then approved the resolution by a vote of 172 in favour to five against (Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau and United States), with five abstentions (Australia, Canada, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Fiji). (See annex II)

In an explanation of vote after the vote, the representative of Argentina remarked that people must be living under subjugation in order for them to exercise a right to self-determination. In terms of the Malvinas Islands, over which there was a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom, that right was not applicable. That situation must be solved through bilateral negotiations, taking into account the interest of the islanders.

The representative of Portugal, speaking on behalf of the European Union and associated States, restated her commitment to enabling the Palestinian people to fulfil their right to self-determination, including the possibility of establishing a sovereign State as set forth in the Road Map, and as agreed upon by both parties. Such a solution was the best guarantee for Israel's security and its acceptance as an integrated partner in the region.

She said the Union was ready to contribute to preparations for the upcoming Annapolis conference within the context of the Quartet, and would continue to support the parties with their ongoing negotiations. Moreover, progress in negotiations should go hand in hand with a strengthening of Palestinian institutions, which would also help improve the day-to-day life of Palestinian people. Meanwhile, the parties in question should take additional steps towards implementing the Road Map and the Agreement on Movement and Access.

The representative of Canada reiterated his country's strongest possible support for the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination, as well as its full backing of the Quartet's Road Map, which had been endorsed by the Security Council. However, as the resolution did not adequately address the responsibilities of both parties to the conflict to demonstrate efforts towards the goals set out in the Road Map, Canada had chosen to abstain.

The observer for Palestine expressed her appreciation to all the countries that had supported the resolution; its adoption by an overwhelming majority was a reaffirmation of the international community's unwavering commitment to the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. It was regrettable, however, that it could not have been approved by consensus, and the fact that Israel continued to cast a negative vote on a resolution that simply reaffirmed international law was a matter of deep concern to her delegation. It was also totally contradictory to Israel's professed position in favour of a peace settlement. Moreover, living in peace and security was not an exclusive Israeli right; it was a mutual need and right.

She said that recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination would have been an acknowledgement by Israel that its occupation of Palestinian territory was illegal and untenable. After all these years, and two days before the fortieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 242, it had to be obvious to Israel and the rest of the international community that the former's security could not be assured through the continuation of the occupation. If there was to be peace in the Middle East, the rights of people had to be recognized. It was hoped that such a resolution would not be necessary next year, but if it was proposed, it should be adopted without a vote.

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ANNEX II

Vote on Right of Palestinian People to Self-Determination

The resolution on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (document A/C.3/62/L.63) was approved by a recorded vote of 172 in favour to 5 against, with 5 abstentions, as follows:

In favour: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal,

Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against: Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, United States.

Abstain: Australia, Cameroon, Canada, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji.

Absent: Central African Republic, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Kiribati, Nauru, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Tonga.

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