



Press Release

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Fifty-second General Assembly
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SELF-DETERMINATION SHOULD COME SOON TO PALESTINIANS IN CURRENT PEACE PROCESS, SOCIAL COMMITTEE ASSERTS

Text Would Have Assembly Seek Wide Support for Quest; Debate on Human Rights Continues, High Commissioner Welcomes Endorsement of Her Mandate

The General Assembly would express the hope that the Palestinian people would soon exercise their right to self-determination in the current peace process, by the terms of one of three draft resolutions approved this afternoon by the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural).

The draft was approved by a vote of 141 in favour, to 2 against (Israel, United States), with 7 abstentions (El Salvador, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Georgia, Norway, Uruguay). By the text, the Assembly would urge all States and the specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations system to continue supporting and assisting the Palestinian people in their quest for self-determination. The representatives of Israel, United States, Syria, Lebanon, Norway and Iran spoke in explanation of vote. The Observer for Palestine also spoke.

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Draft Texts for Action

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Under a draft resolution on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (document A/C.3/52/L.41), the Assembly would express deep concern over the deterioration of the Middle East peace process, including the lack of implementation of the agreements signed between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Government of Israel. It would urge all States and the United Nations system to continue supporting and assisting the Palestinian people in their quest for self-determination.

The draft is sponsored by Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Guyana, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Monaco, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam and Yemen.

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Action on Drafts

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The Committee then took up the draft resolution on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

Mr. BUSACCA (Italy), Committee Chairman, said the draft had no programme budget implications. He reminded the Committee that Brunei Darussalam had been added to the list of co-sponsors when the draft text was introduced (on 13 November).

Additional co-sponsors were added as follows: Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Angola.

The Chairman said a recorded vote had been requested.

The representative of the United States, speaking in explanation of vote, said he opposed the draft because it injected the United Nations into the Middle East peace process on a final status issue that was to be the subject of direct negotiation among the parties to the conflict. It singled out one group of people for self-determination. There were numerous other groups of people throughout the world, some of whom regarded themselves as being under foreign occupation, yet no resolution singled them out for special treatment. Adoption of a politicized resolution would not contribute to a reinvigoration of the peace process; it might have the opposite effect.

The representative of Israel said the draft would have an adverse effect on the outcome of the final status talks between Israel and the Palestinians. The matter should be dealt with on a bilateral basis. Israel looked forward to progress in the talks between the two parties.

The draft resolution was approved by a recorded vote of 141 in favour, 2 against (Israel and the United States), with 7 abstentions (El Salvador, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Georgia, Norway and Uruguay) (See Annex).

Speaking in explanation of vote, the representative of Syria welcomed the approval of the draft. The overwhelming majority indicated the resolve of the international community to end to the suffering of the Palestinian people. He hoped negotiations between the two parties would lead to a final and just solution to the situation in the Middle East, on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolution. He had a reservation on the fifth preambular paragraph because it did not reflect the provisions of Council resolution 242 of 1967.

The representative of Lebanon said he had voted in favour of the draft resolution, which expressed support of the people of Lebanon to the Palestinian people for an end to their suffering. They had the right to self-determination. On preambular paragraph 4, concerning the peace process, he said the Israelis had been responsible for its deterioration. He also had a reservation on preambular paragraph 5 because it did not call for the withdrawal of Israel from all territory taken by force.

The representative of Norway said he supported the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Norway continued to encourage the parties to step up their negotiations and to start the final status negotiations as soon as possible. Nevertheless, Norway's position on the issue had not changed, and he had, therefore, abstained.

The representative of Iran said he voted in favour of the draft resolution, but he had a reservation on preambular paragraph 5 because what was stated therein would not lead to the full resolution of the Palestinian situation.

The Observer for Palestine expressed appreciation to all the States which had voted in favour of the draft, and said she was particularly grateful to the representative of Egypt for his efforts which led to the positive outcome. The additional co-sponsors were welcomed. The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination was assured by the United Nations Charter and all international human rights instruments. Recognition of that right would not prejudice the result of the peace process or its success. The negotiation process did not mean that the Palestinian people should abandon their inalienable rights. She hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted unanimously at a later stage. The international community should work together to ensure the rights of the Palestinian people, as well as their independence.

The Committee concluded its consideration of the agenda item on the rights of peoples to self-determination.

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Rights of Reply

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DANIEL TAUB (Israel) said this morning's statement by the Palestinian representative had brought back the sterile statements that had not helped matters. If Palestinians wanted to make progress, they should take serious measures against terrorism. They should arrest terrorists and not release them, and they should confiscate weapons. Palestinians should not just broadcast their grievances, but they should deal with them through negotiations. The human rights of the Palestinians was a serious issue, but until they were willing to sit down for negotiation, it was hard to take them seriously.

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ANNEX

Vote on Right of Palestinian People to Self-Determination

The draft resolution on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination (document A/C.3/52/L.41) was approved by a recorded vote of 142 in favour to 2 against, with 7 abstentions:

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Syria, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

Against: Israel, United States.

Abstain: El Salvador, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Georgia, Marshall Islands, Norway, Uruguay.

Absent: Albania, Austria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Grenada, Honduras, Madagascar, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Palau, Panama, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Suriname, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Zambia.

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