

Expert Roundup on:

"Revised Palestinian Statehood Bid in the UN General Assembly"

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Participants:

Research Associates of MUSLIM Institute

&

Diplomats from the Embassy of Palestine in Islamabad-Pakistan

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A delegation of MUSLIM Institute a research based think tank was called on by the Palestinian diplomats at the Embassy of Palestine in Islamabad-Pakistan; in this meeting the revised Palestinian statehood bid which is set for a vote in the UN General Assembly on November 29 was discussed.

During the meeting it was discussed that for centuries there was no such conflict. In the 19th century the land of Palestine was inhabited by a multicultural population – approximately 86 percent Muslim, 10 percent Christian, and 4 percent Jewish – but the right to live in peace was not given to Majority Muslim population living in Palestine.

In 1947 the United Nations decided to intervene. However, rather than adhering to the principle of "self-determination of peoples," in which the people themselves create their own state and system of government, the UN chose to revert to the medieval strategy whereby an outside power divides up other people's land. Under considerable Jewish pressure, the UN recommended giving away 55% of Palestine to a Jewish state – despite the fact that this group represented only about 30% of the total population, and owned fewer than 7% of the land.

From 1947-1949 war which was invaded by Israel and five Arab armies were involved in this war, and the whole battle was fought on land that was to have been the Palestinian state.

It is significant to note that Arab armies entered the conflict only after Jewish forces had committed 16 massacres, including the grisly massacre of over 100 men, women, and children at Deir Yassin. Future Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, head of one of the Jewish terrorist groups, described this as "splendid," and stated: "As in Deir Yassin, so everywhere, we will attack and smite the enemy.

By the end of the war, Israel had conquered 78 percent of Palestine; three-quarters of a million Palestinians had been made refugees; over 500 towns and villages had been obliterated; and a new map was drawn up, in which every city, river and hillock received a new, Hebrew name, as all vestiges of the Palestinian culture were to be erased. For decades Israel denied the existence of this population, former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir once saying: "There is no such thing as a Palestinian."

In 1967, Israel conquered still more land. Following the Six Day War, in which Israeli forces launched a highly successful surprise attack on Egypt, Israel occupied the final 22% of Palestine that had eluded it in 1948 – the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Since, according to international law it is inadmissible to acquire territory by war, these are occupied territories and do not belong to Israel. It also occupied parts of Egypt (since

returned) and Syria (which remain under occupation). Also during the Six Day War, Israel attacked a US Navy ship, the USS Liberty, killing and injuring over 200 American servicemen. (In 2004 a high-level commission chaired by Admiral Thomas Moorer, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, found this attack to be "an act of war against the United States," a fact few news media have reported.)

There are two primary issues at the core of this continuing conflict. First, there is the inevitably destabilizing effect of trying to maintain an ethnically preferential state, particularly when it is largely of foreign origin. The original population of what is now Israel was 96 percent Muslim and Christian, yet, these refugees are prohibited from returning to their homes in the self-described Jewish state (and those within Israel are subjected to systematic discrimination).

Second, Israel's continued military occupation and confiscation of privately owned land in the West Bank, and control over Gaza, are extremely oppressive, with Palestinians having minimal control over their lives. Thousands of Palestinian men, women, and children are held in Israeli prisons. Palestinian borders (even internal ones) are controlled by Israeli forces. Periodically men, women, and children are strip searched; people are beaten; women in labor are prevented from reaching hospitals (at times resulting in death); food and medicine are blocked from entering Gaza, producing an escalating humanitarian crisis. Israeli forces invade almost daily, injuring, kidnapping, and sometimes killing inhabitants.

According to the Oslo peace accords of 1993, these territories were supposed to finally become a Palestinian state. However, after years of Israel continuing to confiscate land and conditions steadily worsening, the Palestinian population rebelled. (The Barak offer, widely reputed to be generous, was anything but.) This uprising, called the "Intifada" (Arabic for "shaking off") began at the end of September 2000.

Today on November 29 when the revised Palestinian statehood bid which is set for a vote in the UN General Assembly it was analyzed in the meeting that;

- Just like any other human being on Earth, Palestinians had the right to create a viable State that is what they had for too long been denied the fundamental right to self-determination. They continued to look up to the United Nations to give them hope so that they could join all Member States in declaring that the "people of the United Nations" were determined to promote social progress and better standards of life "in larger freedom". If the international community failed to heed their voices, again, history would reserve a harsh judgement on that collective failure.

- It is the Responsibility of the Muslim countries to not only vote for the membership but also to convince the international community for this genuine right of the Palestinians and also thwart any attempt to block the resolution. A firm and joint stance of the Muslim countries is warranted to show solidarity with the Palestinian brothers and neutralize intrigues of opponents. It would also send a strong message to Israel.
- Palestine was unable to garner enough support in the UN Security Council, and faced the threat of veto from the United States.
- If the United States opposes the renewed Palestine bid, it will risk alienating the Arab and Islamic world on an issue of central political significance and at a time of great political upheaval. The opposition could isolate Washington, exposing it to criticisms of hypocrisy (e.g., supporting a rebellion in Libya and Egypt, and the US stance on newly separated Sudan but opposing the self-determination of Palestinians) and impair its ability to mediate the Israeli-Palestinian peace and cultivate alliances with nascent Arab democracies.