When Will the UN Make the Palestinians Uphold Their Commitments?

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Welcome to Israel’s world of ethereal expectations — the standard of moral perfection to which it is routinely held, and the dizzying array of double standards to which it is casually subjected.

This is all the more tragically absurd when compared with the zero standards by which the world judges the Palestinians. When it comes to holding Palestinians accountable for their misdeeds or noncompliance, the international community merely shrugs and offers them the proverbial “Palestinian pass.”

Take, for instance, the miserably misguided UN Security Council Resolution 2334. Setting aside its many contradictions from UN Security Council 242, which for decades stood as the basis upon which the exchange of land for peace would end the Middle East conflict, this new resolution directly indicts Israeli settlements as a “major obstacle” to the two-state solution. The resolution claims that these settlements have “no legal validity,” but it also has something to say about terrorism and violence.

Resolution 2334 calls for “immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation.” Unfortunately, it castigates no particular party, as if terrorism is an Israeli preoccupation — as if Israeli children are being taught that Palestinian children are pigs and monkeys, instead of the other way around. The resolution specifically condemns Israel for its settlements; Palestinians, however, are blamed for nothing in particular. If one didn’t know better, or simply wished to remain in an alternate reality, he might believe that terrorism is Israel’s fault, too.

No one should be surprised by this omission of responsibility. When it comes to the Palestinians, the international community always looks the other way. Even Resolution 242 instilled a legacy of focusing on Israeli withdrawal from territories, and treading more gently on what is expected of Arabs in return.  Specifically, under Resolution 242, Israel must withdraw from territories, but there must also be a “termination of all claims or states of belligerency,” mutual recognition, and “the right to live in peace within secure boundaries.”

Whenever someone self-righteously points to UN resolutions and expresses moral outrage that Israel still “occupies” the West Bank, he is, unwittingly at best, and maliciously at worst, applying obligations against Israel unilaterally — while ignoring the mutually reinforcing obligations that these UN resolutions imposed on the Arab world.

Where is the Palestinian “termination of all claims”? Surely the “right of return,” or the shrill, genocidal chanting of “from the river to the sea,” is not suggestive of a people who understand that Israel is under no duty to surrender any land unless Palestinians are faithful to the terms that apply to them.

Similarly, where is the mutual recognition of Israel in the PLO and Hamas charters? A determination to kill all Jews is not the kind of good faith that these resolutions contemplated. And, finally, when Israeli civilians are tormented by terrorism, and rockets from Gaza, how exactly is Israel’s “right to live in peace within secure boundaries” being honored?

It’s not. And yet the world still calls for Israeli withdrawal. The hard gaze is always on the land; meanwhile, the joint exchange for peace, which is no less of an essential requirement, is treated as an illusory promise that no Palestinian is ever obligated to fulfill.

The day after passage of Resolution 2334, the Palestinian Authority celebrated the news with a cartoon on its Facebook page showing a bloody knife thrust into a map of Israel.

Clearly, ending violence and incitement is not part of the Palestinian agenda. Indeed, through Palestinian eyes, Resolution 2334 was interpreted not as imposing an affirmative obligation on the Palestinians, but rather granting them an additional license to kill — as if they required any further motivation.

This fashionable excusing of Palestinian terrorism is borderline racism, ascribing barbarism to an entire population. The world seems to be saying: Palestinians can’t possibly end the violence.They have no impulse control.  The rules of civilization do not apply to them.

Imagine saying this about any other people: that they must be permitted to stab at will, to mow down civilians in their cars. Holding them accountable is pointless and unnecessary.

What should we make of this infantilizing of Palestinians? Perhaps it’s just a form of forgivable antisemitism taken to new levels of ingenuity.

Instead of moving the American embassy to Jerusalem, perhaps the Trump administration should undertake a more novel strategy: Place the Palestinians on notice that terrorism is as much an impediment to peace as are settlements, and that foreign aid, and America’s goodwill in the peace process, will depend on the Palestinians honoring their obligations.

There are meaningful gestures for Israel to make, as well. But Palestinians have proven over and over again that their lust of violence is much stronger than their taste for nation building.