Nikki Haley’s 2018 UN News Conference

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Happy New Year. It is great to see everyone again. Happy 2018. We know it’s going to be a great year. What we wanted to do was talk about the fact 2017 was a very active year here at the U.N. and we expect a lot of activity this year as well. We are starting off fast. I want to touch on a few topics that are now front and center facing the world.

In these first days of 2018, nowhere is the urgency of peace, security and freedom being more tested than in Iran. By the thousands, Iranian citizens are taking to the street to protest the oppression of their own government. It takes great bravery for the Iranian people to use the power of their voice against their government, especially when their government has a long history of murdering its own people who dare to speak the truth. So we applaud the tremendous courage of the Iranian people. The government of Iran is actively attempting to stop social media and other forms of communication that allow their citizens’ voices to be heard. So we want to help amplify the voices of the Iranian people. Here are some of the messages they are chanting today: ‘All these brigades have come out to the streets. They come out against the leader.’ ‘Political prisoners must be freed.’ ‘Independence, freedom, Iranian republic.’ ‘Neither Gaza nor Lebanon, my life only for Iran.’ ‘Let go of Syria, think of us.’ ‘We will die but we will take Iran back.’ ‘Don’t be afraid, don’t be afraid, we are all together.’ And in reference to the Supreme Leader, ‘Feel some shame, let go of the country.’

Those are not my words, those are not the words of the United States, those are the words of the brave people of Iran. Now the Iranian dictatorship is trying to do what it always does, which is to say that the protests were designed by Iran’s enemies. We all know that is complete nonsense. The demonstrations are completely spontaneous. They are virtually in every city in Iran. This is the precise picture of a long oppressed people rising up against their dictators.

The international community has a role to play on this. The freedoms enshrined in the United Nations charter are under attack in Iran. Dozens have already been killed. Hundreds have been arrested. If the Iranian dictatorship’s history is any guide, we can expect more outrageous abuses in the days to come. The U.N. must speak out. In the days ahead we will be calling for an emergency session, both here in New York and at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. We must not be silent. The people of Iran are crying out for freedom. All freedom-loving people must stand with their cause. The international community made the mistake of failing to do that in 2009. We must not make that mistake again.

On a second matter, the crisis in North Korea will continue to have our attention in 2018. We finished December with our third strong sanctions resolution of last year. That was a great achievement. But there is more to do to ensure full implementation of the Security Council as we hear reports that North Korea might be preparing for another missile test. I hope that does not happen. But if it does, we must bring more measures to bear on the North Korean regime.

The civilized world must remain united and vigilant against the rogue state’s development of a nuclear arsenal. We will never accept a nuclear North Korea.

There’s one more item I want to mention. You have all heard President Trump’s comments made about Pakistan. The administration is withholding $255 million in assistance to Pakistan. There are clear reasons for this. Pakistan played a double game for years. They work with us at times and they also harbor the terrorists that attack our troops in Afghanistan. That game is not acceptable to this administration. We expect far more cooperation from Pakistan in the fight against terrorism.

The President is willing to go to great lengths to stop all funding from Pakistan as they continue to harbor and support terrorism.

And that brings me to my final point. The Pakistan aid issue is not connected to the vote we had with Jerusalem. It is entirely connected to Pakistan’s harboring of terrorists. However, as I said in December, we won’t forget the Jerusalem vote. To that end, tomorrow night we’re having a reception for those who chose not to oppose the U.S. position. This is a great sign of U.S. friendship and I look forward to tomorrow evening. We hope to see more of this in 2018.

The United States is asked to do a huge amount around the world and we’re happy to do that. We expect to be treated respectfully in return. I wish all of you a good 2018 and I’ll take a couple of questions.

Q: Thank you. Which human body do you want to handle Iran and to do what?

A: I think right now we are going to have conversations with the Security Council and see what we need to do to have an emergency session. One way or another we will have a meeting on what is happening in Iran with the protests and their fight for freedom.

Q: Thank you Ambassador. In light of the protests, is there any unilateral action the United States plans to take against Iran? Also, here at the Security Council, do you plan to hold Iran accountable on another front, perhaps through the Yemen sanctions committee, for the missiles that they fired into Saudi Arabia, that presentation las month?

A: There’s no unilateral plans at this time that have come from the administration. What I can tell you is we are absolutely going to move forward on the missiles. You will see us look at resolution 2231 carefully and see what needs to be changed so we can put a stop to the Iranian testing of ballistic missiles.

Q: Will the U.S. maintain its present level of funding of the U.N. Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in light of the General Assembly Jerusalem resolution, pushed by the Palestinians, and the Palestinian U.N, representative’s threat to ‘unleash all the weapons we have at the U.N.’?

A: I think the President has basically said he does not want to give any additional funding or stop funding until the Palestinians are agreeing to come back to the negotiation table. And what we saw with the resolution was not helpful to the situation. We are trying to move for a peace process but if that does not happen, the President’s not going to continue to fund that situation.

Q: Now you are so strong when it comes to the freedom of the Iranian people but you have a different meaning of freedom and dignity when it comes to the Palestinian people who have been brutalized for over 50 years of occupation. Second question, related to it, what made you believe that you are on the right side of history, when you stood alone in the Security Council against 14 members? And in the GA 128 countries, you only found countries like Palau and Nauru next to you, what made you believe that you are on the right side of history? Thank you very much.

A: I stood proudly even if I was the only hand in the Security Council, to fight for the will of the people of the United States. They wanted to see the embassy moved to Jerusalem and we followed through with that. We very much still want to have a peace process. Nothing changes with that. The Palestinians now have to show their will that they want to come to the table. As of now they are not coming to the table but they ask for aid. We are not giving the aid. We are going to make sure they come to the table and we want to move forward with the peace process. One last question.

Q: Thank you. Can I ask you, regarding North Korea, as you heard reports about South Korea proposing talks with North Korea, can you give your reaction to that? And about this talks does it affect any of your policies putting pressure on North Korea?

A: We won’t take any of the talks seriously if they don’t do something to ban nuclear weapons in North Korea. We consider this to be a very reckless regime. We don’t think we need a band-aid and we don’t think we need to smile and take a picture. We think that we need to have them stop nuclear weapons and they need to stop it now. So North Korea can talk with anyone they want but the U.S. is not going to recognize it or acknowledge it until they agree to ban the nuclear weapons that they have.