Next Year in Jerusalem

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When Donald Trump made good this month on his campaign promise to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, it changed almost nothing on the ground: The reality is that Jerusalem has been Israel’s capital for decades.

Likewise for the United Nations’ vote Thursday to condemn the U.S. for the move. It changes nothing, because the U.N. doesn’t get to decide which capitals America recognizes and where it puts its embassies. But the resolution is a reminder of how deep anti-American and anti-Israel sentiment runs at Turtle Bay.

Only seven countries—Guatemala, Honduras, Togo, Nauru, Palau, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands—were willing to stand with Uncle Sam and Israel and vote against the resolution. Thirty-five nations abstained, including Canada and the Czech Republic, which is at least better than outright condemnation. But 128 countries voted yes, with Britain, France, Japan and Germany joining Iran, Russia, China and North Korea to condemn the U.S.

The question is what comes next. Before the measure passed, Nikki Haley, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., delivered a speech reminiscent of Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s rebuttal in 1975 when he was the American Ambassador and the U.N. passed a resolution declaring Zionism a form of racism.

“We will remember [this vote],” Ms. Haley said, “when we are called upon to once again make the world’s largest contribution to the United Nations. And we will remember it when so many countries come calling on us, as they so often do, to pay even more and to use our influence for their benefit.” President Trump said something similar at his cabinet meeting, that “we’ll save a lot” by cutting aid to countries that went against us.

These are welcome reminders to an assembly that has long been an embarrassment to its founding principles. Ms. Haley was joined in her reaction to this insult by some members of Congress. Sen. Marco Rubio (R., Fla.) also said the U.S. ought to reconsider the money the U.S. pays to keep the U.N. going.

The feeling is understandable, and we hope the Trump Administration finds ways to make clear its displeasure to the friends who abandoned the U.S. A complete pullout from the U.N. is unlikely, if only because the U.S. is a member to serve America’s interests, not the U.N.’s. Without the U.S. as a check, the United Nations would allow the Palestinians and others to write their own terms for the Middle East, and denunciations of America would be as common as denunciations of Israel. This is the reason Israel remains in the body, notwithstanding the routine insults from countries with obscene human-rights violations.

The best way for America to show the hollowness of this U.N. stunt is by proceeding with its plans to build an Embassy in Jerusalem—and demonstrate to the U.N. that America is one nation that stands by its friends.