Lies and Israel-Hatred At the UN

February 21, 2018

By Joseph Klein

Frontpage Mag

<https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/269380/lies-and-israel-hatred-un-joseph-klein>

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas addressed the United Nations Security Council on Tuesday, February 20th. He delivered many of the same old Palestinian talking points. He claimed that the Palestinians remain open to negotiations based on the pre-June 1967 "borders," with East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital. “We are ready to take the longest journey,” Abbas declared. “We are ready to begin negotiations immediately.” After appealing to the Security Council for “help,” however, Abbas showed his true colors by walking out of the chamber immediately upon the conclusion of his speech. He apparently thought it was beneath his "dignity" to hear what the Israeli UN ambassador and the members of the Security Council had to say.

Abbas used his Security Council speech to blame the Israeli "occupation" and its continued settlements in violation of "international law" as the real obstacles to peace. He said that the Palestinians have engaged in dialogue with Israeli leaders on several occasions, and that Israel was responsible for shutting the door on a two-state solution. Abbas seemed to have forgotten that it was he who rejected several Israeli peace offers, including one that would have resulted in Israel’s virtual withdrawal from the West Bank, a connection between the West Bank and Gaza, and even placing the Old City under some form of international control.

Abbas repeated his condemnation of President Trump's “unlawful” decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem. Spurning any further U.S. leadership of peace efforts, Abbas called for the convening of an international peace conference by mid-2018. Its purpose would be to set the path for acceptance of "the State of Palestine" as a full member of the United Nations and to establish an international mechanism to facilitate resolution of all outstanding issues based on "relevant UN resolutions and international law." Rather than enter into direct unconditional negotiations with Israel’s leader, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Abbas continues to use the UN and other international forums shields for his absolutist demands against any real process of give-and-take.

Abbas’s speech to the Security Council was temperate in tone only by comparison to his 2½-hour rant to the PLO Central Council last month in which he claimed that “Israel is a colonialist project that has nothing to do with Jews.” While telling the Security Council that the Palestinians’ problem was “not with the followers of Judaism,” he had told the PLO Central Council that there was no historical connection of Jews to the Holy Land. “Jews were used as a tool under the concept of the promised land — call it whatever you want,” Abbas said last month to his own comrades. “Everything has been made up.” For the benefit of his Security Council audience, however, he promised that East Jerusalem, as the Palestinians’ capital, would remain open to the faithful of all three monotheistic religions, including Jews. We saw how badly that worked out last time when Jordan occupied the Old City prior to the Six-Day War.

Although attempting to put on his “moderate” mask while addressing the Security Council, Abbas could not help resorting at times to falsifying history and peddling the tiresome Palestinian victimhood narrative. As he had done last month before the PLO Central Council, Abbas told the Security Council that the Palestinians are “the descendants of the Canaanites who lived in Palestine 5000 years ago.” This is an absurd claim on its face, with no historical or archeological evidence to back it up whatsoever. The truth is that many Palestinians today are descendants of immigrants from multiple countries in the region who arrived in what was then called Palestine during the 19th and early 20th centuries, including Muslim migrants who came from the Sudan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, Morocco, Bosnia, and other parts of western and central Asia.

Abbas cited international law selectively to support the Palestinians’ claims to the land that he accused Israel of illegally occupying. As he has done before, he condemned the 100 years old Balfour Declaration, by which he said, “those who do not own gave to those who have no right.” Contrary to Abbas’s false assumption that the Palestinians were indigenous to the land, the Palestinian immigrants had no rights of their own to the land superior to the rights of Jews, some of whom, for example, bought their lands from absentee owners. After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the right to a Jewish homeland was enshrined in international law in the San Remo Accord of 1920, and carried forward by the Council of the League of Nations in 1922 in the British Palestine Mandate.

Abbas did mention United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 (1947), the partition resolution, in his recital of international law he used to support the Palestinians’ claims. However, he left out the resolution’s reference to “Independent Arab and Jewish States.” (Emphasis added) Instead, Abbas still lamented to the Security Council that “seventy years have passed since the Palestinian Nakba ["Day of the Catastrophe"] took place.” Citing the UN Charter, he complained that “no one has held Israel accountable when they occupied our territories in 1948.” (Emphasis added) In other words, Abbas only considers international law relevant when it supports Palestinian claims. He considers recognition by international law of the right of Jews to their own homeland a catastrophe, and the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, even within the pre-June 1967 armistice lines, illegal Israeli “occupation” of Palestinian land.

Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon addressed the Security Council immediately following Abbas’s speech and walkout.  “You just addressed the members of the Security Council and spoke of your commitments to peace. This is what you often do when speaking to international forums,” Ambassador Danon said to the absent Abbas, “but, when you address your people, you convey a very different message.” Ambassador Danon went on to detail examples of anti-Semitic sentiments and incitement to violence by Abbas, quoting from his speech to the PLO Central Council last month. Israel’s ambassador then declared, “Mr. Abbas, your incitement does not end with rhetoric. You have made it official Palestinian policy to sponsor terrorism. In 2017, you spent $345 million paying terrorists for killing innocent Israelis. That is fifty percent of the total foreign aid donated to the PA.  This is money you could have spent building forty hospitals. This is money you could have used to build over 170 schools. Every single year.”

U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley, during her remarks to the Security Council, warned, “The Palestinian leadership has a choice to make between two different paths. There is the path of absolutist demands, hateful rhetoric, and incitement to violence. That path has led, and will continue to lead, to nothing but hardship for the Palestinian people.” She added, also addressing the absent Abbas, “You can choose to denounce the United States, reject the U.S. role in peace talks, and pursue punitive measures against Israel in international forums like the UN. I assure you that path will get the Palestinian people exactly nowhere toward the achievement of their aspirations. Or, you can choose to put aside your anger about the location of our embassy, and move forward with us toward a negotiated compromise that holds great potential for improving the lives of the Palestinian people. Our negotiators are sitting right behind me, ready to talk. But we will not chase after you. The choice, Mr. President, is yours.”

Unfortunately, Abbas was not in the Security Council chamber to hear Ambassador Haley’s call for talks. He had made his choice when he picked up his marbles and walked out.

For its part, the United Nations remains in the Palestinians’ corner. Prior to the address by the Palestinian leader and Ambassador Danon, UN Secretary General António Guterres and Nikolay Mladenov, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, gave statements to the Security Council. Mr. Mladenov’s statement included this incredible line: “Settlement construction is not a morally appropriate way to respond to murder,” he said. He was commenting on Israel’s decision to approve the establishment of a new settlement to absorb the residents of an outpost where a resident was killed last month. Apparently, it did not occur to Mr. Mladenov to say that murder is not a morally appropriate way to respond to settlement construction. This is even worse than moral relativism.

In the read-out of Secretary General Guterres’ meeting with Abbas, nothing was said about asking Abbas to cease incitement to violence or the Palestinian Authority payments to terrorists and their families. Rather, the Secretary General only expressed his concern about “the funding shortfall of the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees)” programs, without calling for any reforms. When I asked the Secretary General’s spokesperson for a reaction to Abbas’s decision to walk out of the Security Council chamber before Israel or any of the members of the Security Council had a chance to speak, he declined to comment.

So much for the UN’s commitment to real face-to-face dialogue or moral clarity. As Ambassador Haley observed, “The problem is that the UN has proven itself time and again to be a grossly biased organization when it comes to Israel.”