Abbas calls on UN to oust Israel at world body’s first ‘Nakba Day’ commemoration

May 15, 2023

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The Times of Israel

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/abbas-calls-on-un-to-oust-israel-at-world-bodys-first-nakba-day-commemoration/>

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas compared Israeli rhetoric to Nazi propaganda, demanded Israel be suspended from the UN if it does not grant Palestinians a state and a ‘right of return’ for millions of refugees, and denied Jewish ties to the Temple Mount during a speech at UN Headquarters in New York on Monday.

Abbas was speaking at the UN General Assembly’s first-ever commemoration of the ‘Nakba,’ Arabic for ‘catastrophe’ and the Palestinian term for Israel’s creation.

Israel harshly opposed the event marking the 75th anniversary of the Nakba, calling it a ‘distortion of history,’ and said it had convinced dozens of other countries to boycott the commemoration.

Abbas, wearing a key on his lapel symbolizing a planned return to his family’s former home in Israel, said Israel had agreed to a Palestinian state in 1947 and had agreed to the return of Palestinian refugees to join the UN. The Jews in the UK’s Mandatory Palestine accepted the UN’s two-state solution at the time, but the Arab world rejected it and launched the 1948 War of Independence.

‘Forcing Israel to implement these two resolutions was a condition, a prerequisite for their membership in the UN at the time, however, sadly, certain countries, we all know who we are talking about… have obstructed deliberately the implementation of these resolutions in a practice that undermines justice, ethics, and human values,’ Abbas said, [speaking at the UN](https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1p/k1p6dlehtq) for an hour, though he had been allotted 30 minutes for his speech.

‘We demand today, officially, in accordance with international law and international resolutions, to make sure that Israel respects these resolutions, or suspend Israel’s membership from the UN,’ he said.

The immediate establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, and the right to return for all refugees and their descendants, are non-starters for Israel, which views both moves as threats to its existence.

Abbas specifically blamed the UK and US for the Nakba and Israel’s establishment.

‘Britain and the United States specifically bear political and ethical responsibility directly for the Nakba of the Palestinian people because they took part in rendering our people a victim when they decided to establish and plant another entity in our historic homeland for their own colonial goals,’ Abbas said. ’These countries wanted to get rid of their Jews and benefit from their presence in Palestine.’

He compared Israeli claims of cultivating the land to rhetoric by Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels.

‘Israeli and Zionist claims continue by saying that Israel made the desert bloom. As if Palestine was a desert and they made the desert bloom,’ Abbas said. ‘These are lies. They continue to lie, like Goebbels, and they continue to lie until people believe their lies.’

Abbas has landed in hot water for making similar statements before, including last year in Germany, when he accused Israel of [perpetrating ‘50 Holocausts’](https://www.timesofisrael.com/a-monstrous-lie-abbas-50-holocausts-claim-met-with-outrage-in-israel-germany/) at a press conference alongside Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Israel, Germany, and the US reacted to the statement with shock and outrage.

Abbas called on the UN to establish an annual event with a UN resolution to commemorate the Nakba, ‘considering the 15th of May of every year, an international day to commemorate the Palestinian plight which is a plight for humanity as a whole.’

He also said the Palestinians were building a ‘commemoration monument’ to the Nakba.

Abbas attacked the hardline Israeli government, saying it was urging a ‘new Nakba’ against the Palestinians, naming Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich.

‘Netanyahu and other even worse people, Smotrich and Ben Gvir, this is what they’re calling for — some people are calling for massacring Palestinians and this is what happened in Huwara,’ he said. ‘When things happened in Huwara, Ben Gvir said, ‘Why didn’t you massacre them?’ so what happened in Huwara, the killing and burning of houses and properties by terrorist settler gangs happened under the protection of Israeli army.’

Ben Gvir did not make such a remark after settlers rampaged earlier this year through the West Bank village, burning cars and homes. One man died at the time under unclear circumstances.

Abbas was likely referring to a statement made by Smotrich shortly after the incident, saying that ‘the village of Huwara needs to be wiped out. I think the State of Israel should do it,’ comments which he [later apologized](https://www.timesofisrael.com/smotrich-says-his-call-to-wipe-out-huwara-was-an-emotional-slip-of-the-tongue/) for.

The PA president also denied a Jewish connection to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, saying Israelis have ‘been digging for 30 years to find any evidence or proof of the existence’ of Jewish ties to the site.

‘They haven’t found anything,’ he said. ‘Al-Sharif belongs exclusively to the Muslims,’ he said, referring to the Temple Mount by its Arabic name. The complex was the site of the two ancient Temples, and, as such, it is the holiest site to Jews. The Al Aqsa Mosque on the mount is the third-holiest shrine for Muslims.

The UN held another commemorative event on Monday evening at the UN General Assembly hall.

Responding Tuesday to Abbas’s remarks, Israeli Ambassador to the UN Gilad Erdan accused the Palestinians of speaking from both sides of their mouths.

‘On the one hand, they talk in the most inciting and despicable manner against the rights of the State of Israel and the Jewish people,’ Erdan told Army Radio. ‘On the other hand, without the security cooperation [between Israel and the PA], without the IDF operating in Judea and Samaria, Abbas long ago would no longer have been chairman of the [Palestinian] authority, because Hamas would do to him and his people exactly what they did in the Gaza Strip.’

Israel opposed the Nakba event and reached out to around 100 countries in recent days in an attempt to convince them to avoid the Nakba event at the UN General Assembly, according to an Israeli diplomat.

Some 32 countries, including the US, the UK, Canada and Ukraine, told Israel they would stay away. Ten of these countries were EU member states, said the diplomat, and three are in Africa. India, where Foreign Minister Eli Cohen visited last week, will also not attend the event.

Other countries, including some who have been particularly critical of Israel in recent years, have told the Foreign Ministry they will be lowering their level of representation at the event.

‘We will fight the lie of the ‘Nakba’ with all our might,’ pledged Cohen in a video statement from Stockholm, ‘and we will not allow the Palestinians to continue spreading lies and to distort history.’

The Israeli mission to the UN urged other diplomats away from the event in a letter, [Erdan said](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israels-un-envoy-urges-other-diplomats-to-stay-away-from-monday-nakba-event/) on Sunday. After the commemoration, the mission said that 44 countries in total had not attended.

‘The thought that an international organization could mark the establishment of one of its member states as a catastrophe or disaster is both appalling and repulsive,’ Erdan wrote in the letter. ’Not only does this condone Jew-hatred, but it also gives a green light to the Palestinians to continue exploiting international organs to promote their libelous narrative.’

The United States Mission to the UN did not participate in the event and said it showed the world body’s slant against Israel.

Washington ‘does not support events [that are] organized or in support of the institutional anti-Israel bias,’ a spokesperson said. ‘Nonetheless, ‘the United States continues to recognize the plight of Palestinian refugees,’ US mission spokesman Nate Evans said in a statement.

‘The United States supports actions in the UN that bring the parties together and lay the groundwork for a negotiated two-state solution and has also been focused on encouraging the parties to take steps to de-escalate tensions and restore mutual confidence,’ Evans said. ‘At the same time, the United States has longstanding concerns over anti-Israel bias within the UN system, which is also counter-productive to peace.’

The General Assembly [approved the Nakba event in December](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-general-assembly-votes-in-favor-of-commemorating-palestinian-nakba/), with a vote of 90 in favor, 30 against, and 47 abstentions.

[The initiative](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N22/707/31/PDF/N2270731.pdf?OpenElement) was sponsored by Egypt, Jordan, Senegal, Tunisia, Yemen, and the Palestinians.

‘Nakba’ is the Arabic word for ‘catastrophe,’ which Palestinians use to recall the displacement and dispossession they experienced during Israel’s War of Independence in 1948.

The event was held days after the end of a [five-day violent escalation](https://www.timesofisrael.com/well-done-netanyahu-hails-idf-shin-bet-performance-in-gaza-operation/) between Israel and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip, and in the shadow of elevated tensions in the West Bank, with the IDF conducting near-nightly raids in the territory due to a series of deadly Palestinian terror attacks.