Remarks at a UN General Assembly Meeting on a U.S. Draft Resolution to Condemn Hamas Terrorism

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AS DELIVERED

Good afternoon. Today could be a historic day at the United Nations. Or it could be just another ordinary day.

Today could be a day in which the UN General Assembly unconditionally speaks out with moral clarity against one of the most obvious and grotesque cases of terrorism in the world. Or it could be a day in which it refuses to do that.

Ladies and gentlemen, last Friday the General Assembly approved six resolutions condemning Israel in a single day. Six. In an average year, the UN votes against Israel 20 times. Over the years, the UN has voted to condemn Israel over 500 times.

That’s what an ordinary day at the UN looks like.

Much as the United States finds that record appalling, no one can question whether the UN is on record in its hostility toward the State of Israel.

But for good measure, there will be another vote this afternoon that gives everyone another chance to put themselves on record in a way that goes against Israel.

The question before us now is something very different. The question before us now is whether the UN thinks terrorism is acceptable if, and only if, it is directed at Israel. That is something we should all think deeply about.

The resolution we have before us does not comment about the specifics of any peace agreement. As I have said, the UN has commented hundreds of times on what it would like to see in a peace agreement, and it will do it again later today. What this resolution does is stand for a foundational element of peace. That foundation is the rejection of terrorism, because we all know there can be no peace without a mutual agreement that terrorism is unacceptable.

Let’s talk about some of the activities of Hamas, an entity designated by the United States, the European Union, and others as a terrorist organization. Hamas’ charter openly calls for the destruction of Israel. Its statements continually repeat that goal.

Over the years, Hamas has used several barbaric terrorist attacks. Initially, they used suicide bombers. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Hamas members armed with bombs boarded Israeli buses and entered Israeli restaurants and detonated themselves, killing hundreds of innocent civilians and injuring thousands more.

Since then, they moved toward firing rockets indiscriminately into Israel from Gaza. They have launched thousands of them in the last five years, including more than 400 in a two-day period just last month. Neighborhoods were targeted. A bus was hit by an anti-tank missile.

More recently, Hamas tactics have changed again, as it has adopted still more methods of killing Israeli civilians and damaging Israeli civilian property. They have launched flaming kites and balloons by the thousands, often with Nazi symbols on them, into Israeli civilian areas. This is the classic case of terrorism.

And yet, throughout all of this, the United Nations has never once passed a resolution condemning Hamas. Never. Over 700\* resolutions condemning Israel and not one single resolution condemning Hamas. That, more than anything else, is a condemnation of the United Nations itself.

Today – in this moment – the United Nations can change that awful record.

The world is coming to recognize the dangerous and troubling rise in anti-Semitism around the globe. The UN Secretary-General has forcefully spoken out against it, as have many heads of state and parliaments around the world.

And yet, what the UN chooses to do today will speak volumes about each country’s seriousness when it comes to condemning anti-Semitism. Because there is nothing more anti-Semitic than saying terrorism is not terrorism when it’s used against the Jewish people and the Jewish State. There is nothing more anti-Semitic than saying we cannot condemn terrorism against Israel, while we would not hesitate for one minute to condemn the same acts if they were taken against any other country. I’ve watched countries that would never take such positions on their own come together here at the UN and abandon all sense of honesty, all sense of accuracy, and all sense of truth.

Today, we have an opportunity to change that. We can come together as a unified, moral, and powerful force for peace that this institution’s founders intended.

But if that’s not enough to motivate you, then set aside for a moment the death and destruction Hamas has inflicted on Israel. Consider the suffering it has inflicted on the Palestinian people themselves. Hamas has been the de facto government of Gaza since 2007. And yet, after 11 years of Hamas rule, Gaza has electricity for only a few hours a day. Only 10 percent of its population has access to safe drinking water. Unemployment is approaching 50 percent and climbing – one of the highest unemployment rates in the entire world. Hamas uses torture and arbitrary arrests to punish its political opponents. It has made Gaza a police state. All while Hamas spends its resources – including UN resources – on rockets and terror tunnels.

The people who have suffered by far the most because of Hamas are the Palestinian people. For their sake, the world should speak out against the destruction of Hamas and what it continues to cause.

The resolution before us now would right a historic wrong. More importantly, it would put the General Assembly on the side of truth and balance in the effort to achieve peace in the Middle East. The resolution condemns Hamas rocket attacks on innocent civilians. It demands that Hamas and other militant groups end all violent attacks, including the use of flaming kites. And it also reaffirms the UN’s support for a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace.

Before the General Assembly can credibly advocate compromise and reconciliation between the Palestinians and Israel, it must be on record unambiguously and unconditionally condemning Hamas terrorism. Regardless of what any country in this chamber today thinks a future peace settlement should look like, support for this resolution is an essential step to achieving it.

Peace must be built on truth.

I want to take a personal moment and ask my Arab brothers and sisters: is the hatred that strong? Is the hatred toward Israel so strong that you’ll defend a terrorist organization, one that is directly causing harm to the Palestinian people? Isn’t it time to let that go? For true peace and security in the entire region, isn’t it time for both sides to let this go?

For the sake of peace, and for the sake of this institution, I respectfully urge my colleagues to support the United States’ resolution.

Thank you.