

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

POSTAL ADDRESS-ADRESSE POSTALE: UNITED NATIONS, N.Y. 10017
CABLE ADDRESS-ADRESSE TELEGRAPHIQUE: UNATIONS NEWYORK

REFERENCE:

16 January 2005

Excellency *dear John,*

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I am writing in response to your letter of 3 January about the map displayed at last year's observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November 2005.

While the decision to display the map is a decision of Member States not the Secretariat we have, nevertheless, looked into this, and it appears that this map has been displayed annually on the same occasion for many years. It is a historical map, showing Palestine as it was in 1948, at the end of the British Mandate.

As you know, the observance of the Day of Solidarity at the United Nations has been mandated by the General Assembly each year since 1977, and is organized by the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People – a committee of the General Assembly. In providing information about the event on the UN website, therefore, the Secretariat is simply doing its job.

In 1981 the Committee made a specific decision that the map and flag "of Palestine as it existed in 1948" should be displayed inside the conference room; and the practice of doing this during the annual observance has remained unchanged ever since.

It is also customary for the Secretary-General to take part in the observance, and to make a statement. In case you have not seen it, I have pleasure in enclosing a copy of the statement that the Secretary-General made on this most recent occasion.

I might add that your predecessor, Ambassador Danforth, attended and spoke at the same meeting in 2004, in his capacity as President of the Security Council.

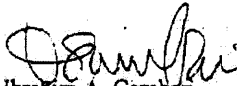
His Excellency
Mr. John R. Bolton
Permanent Representative of the United States
to the United Nations
New York

That said, the Secretary-General is grateful to you and others who have drawn his attention to the map, and to the unfortunate impression that displaying it could give, namely that the United Nations favours the *replacement* of Israel by a single Palestinian state. This, of course, is not the case. As the Secretary-General has repeatedly pointed out, Israel is a full member of the United Nations, with the same rights and obligations as any other member. Both the General Assembly and the Security Council are on record as calling for an independent Palestinian state *alongside* Israel, with the aim of enabling the two peoples to live in peace with each other and their neighbours, within secure and recognized boundaries.

Clearly, as you rightly point out, the display of the 1948 map has acquired a new and very troubling connotation in the light of the remarks made recently by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Secretary-General has made clear his strong disapproval of such remarks – and he hopes that the Member States' Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will consider deciding not to display the 1948 map in future.

I met on 21 December 2005 with the Chairman of the Committee, Ambassador Paul Badji of Senegal, to discuss how this issue might be resolved. I was encouraged by his commitment to address the matter in a manner, which I believe will be acceptable to you. You may wish to discuss the issue further with Ambassador Badji.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest considerations *and a happy new year.*


Ibrahim A. Gambari
Under-Secretary-General
for Political Affairs