

ISRAEL

61st SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Statement by

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the General Assembly

(Register of Damage)

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Madame President,

I would like to begin by clarifying the agenda of the Assembly today. We are not here to discuss a "Register of Damage," as the Secretary-General's report refers to this mechanism, because it is not a Register of Damage. There is already a Register of Damage, on the ground, in Israel, fully operational and able to provide compensation to Palestinians adversely impacted by the security fence.

This, rather, is a Register that Does Damage. It is a Register that Does Damage to the credibility of this Assembly by exploiting the "automatic majority vote." It is a Register that Does Damage to the legitimacy of this organization by abusing procedure. It is a Register that Does Damage to the prospects of direct dialogue by circumventing bilateral negotiations, the only forum that can resolve differences in our region.

This Register, despite the perception of yet another achievement for the Palestinian observer, cannot help the Palestinian people. Let me make it clear, no Palestinian impacted by the security fence will be helped or assisted by this mechanism.

Madame President,

The security fence Israel has built is the direct consequence of Palestinian terror. Were it not for Palestinian terror, there would be no need for a security fence. The Palestinian strategy of encouraging terrorism is injurious to Israel and its citizens, and destructive to the Palestinian's own interests. But a fence can stop the terrorists, where the Palestinian Authority does not. Thousands of Israeli lives – Jew, Christian, and Muslim – have been saved by the security fence, which has been operational in different areas for some time.

The numbers speak entirely for themselves. A similar fence in Gaza, agreed as part of the Israeli-Palestinian Agreements, which garnered no dissent from the UN, has successfully prevented the infiltration of terrorists into Israel. On the other hand, in a mere three year span, 135 suicide bombers from the West Bank carried out 121 terrorist attacks in Israel. Since 2000, over 1000 Israelis have been murdered by Palestinian terrorists. The fence is absolutely necessary.

It is not just Israel who knows the effectiveness of the security fence. Here I will cite for you two recent statements echoing this reality:

The first is from French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy, who during an interview said: (quote) "I have significantly evolved on the matter of the separation fence. Although the wall was a moral and ethical problem for me, when I realized terror attacks were reduced by 80 percent in the areas where the wall was erected, I understood I didn't have the right to think that way" (end quote).

The second is from Ramadan Shalah, the murderous leader of Islamic Jihad, who told Al-Manar television: (quote) "the separation fence is an obstacle to the resistance, and if it were not there the situation would be entirely different," (end quote) – meaning, Palestinian terror could continue undeterred.

Madame President,

As I alluded to earlier, a mechanism already exists in Israel for Palestinians to register their claims of compensation with regard to the building of the security fence.

Any Palestinian land owner can file objections to the use of their land. To date, some 140 cases have already been reviewed, and 6,832,000 NIS, more than \$1.5 million, has been paid by Israel to Palestinian complainants.

Moreover, Israel's Supreme Court has heard a number of cases, brought by Palestinians and Israelis alike, to alter the route of the fence. In some situations, the court has ruled that the route of the fence be changed, if it did not negate security concerns. This is the clearest proof that Israel's building of the fence is solely to protect its citizens – and that the fence is not a border.

The mere fact that the Court allows such petitions to be submitted is a testament to the vibrant democracy in Israel, and our willingness to admit that Israel's government is not above criticism. The process includes giving every affected individual, Palestinian or Israeli, the right to petition Israel's Supreme Court, and numerous such petitions are pending. Indeed, Israel's Supreme Court is one of the few courts in the world, and certainly the only one in the region, that vigorously applies international law to examine the domestic actions of its own government. It is a fiercely independent judicial institution that has earned the respect of jurists and lay people around the world. And it is probably the only Court in the entire Middle East in which any Arab can challenge his own government's actions and be assured of justice, rather than jail.

The route of the barrier, as always intended, will be decided according to security considerations – specifically to the manner that best protects Israelis from Palestinian terror. The fence is reversible. Lives taken by Palestinian terror are not.

Madame President,

Though this is an open forum for the entire General Assembly, I must direct my concluding comments particularly to my Palestinian colleague and the people he represents here at this world body.

Israel was willing to provide compensation to the Palestinians affected by the fence. But instead, you chose to ask the United Nations for its help. Instead of helping your people and receiving direct assistance, you chose to put another political mechanism in place that does not and will not bring relief to your people.

Sadly, this is a repeat pattern of behavior – both on the ground, where direct bilateral conversations are meant to be taking place, and here at the United Nations. And rather than shoulder your national responsibilities when it comes to ending terror and violence against Israel on the ground, you prefer to see Israel sit on trial here in New York, in another misrepresented emergency special session of the General Assembly, reconvened on account of the “automatic majority vote.” No material gain can come to your people from these theatrics – only General Assembly resolutions, only costly UN mechanisms.

Indeed the Secretary-General, in his final remarks on the Middle East to the Security Council earlier this week echoed this sentiment. (quote) “Some may feel satisfaction

at repeatedly passing General Assembly resolutions or holding conferences that condemn Israel's behaviour. But one should also ask whether such steps bring any tangible relief or benefit to the Palestinians" (end quote).

I do hope, Madame President, that the Member States in this body ask themselves that question, and what they wish to achieve when they decided to pump out political resolutions against Israel at this Assembly.

I do hope, Madame President, that the Member States in this body ask themselves that question the next time the Palestinian observer and his allies ask the Assembly to resume the emergency special session, which is an abuse of UN institutional procedure and a mockery of the true agenda – "uniting for peace."

I do hope, Madame President, that the Member States in this body ask themselves that question when they have to fund another mechanism, paid for by the tax money of their citizens, and which will only perpetuate – not resolve – the Palestinian issue. Especially at time when the United Nations is undergoing a process of reform, it is counterproductive – in fact, disingenuous – to demand financing of such a costly and duplicative mechanism. The annual cost of the Register in this resolution is far more than the suggested framework outlined in the Secretary-General's report. Would that money not be better spent elsewhere?

And I do hope, Madame President, that the Member States are aware of the millions of dollars already spent each year by the United Nations to advance the interests of the Palestinians. More than twenty resolutions – most of them redundant and one sided – are adopted by the Assembly annually. Other special bodies and committees, including a whole division of the secretariat itself, are largely manipulated to advocate the Palestinian cause rather than peace.

The real barrier between Israelis and Palestinians is not the security fence, but the terrorism that makes it necessary. Were it not for that terrorism, a viable two State solution would have emerged long ago. Palestinian terrorism seeks not the end of occupation but the end of Israel. Recent statements made by the Hamas Palestinian leadership tell us that much. As long as the Assembly averts its gaze from that stark reality, it does the cause of peace a great disservice. The people in the region deserve, and in fact, demand, better.

Thank you, Madame President,