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| **Statement by Amb Shalev to the UN General Assembly** |

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| **1 Dec 2009** |

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33 for. 13 against. 10 abstentions. The resolution is approved.

Those were the words at Lake Success on November 29, 1947 that announced the [United Nations General Assembly adoption of resolution 181](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace%2BProcess/Guide%2Bto%2Bthe%2BPeace%2BProcess/UN%2BGeneral%2BAssembly%2BResolution%2B181.htm). Those were the words that conferred international legitimacy on the creation of two states for two peoples.

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The Jewish population in then-British-Mandate Palestine accepted this historic resolution. It reflected the Zionist conviction that it was both necessary and possible to live in peace with our neighbors in the land of our forefathers.

Yet the Arab side within the mandate territory and across the region instantly rejected resolution 181. And Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon - members of the United Nations - launched a war of annihilation against Israel together with Jordan and the Arabs of Palestine.

As a result of this rejection and this war, many Palestinian Arabs became refugees, while a similar number of Jews, who lived in Arab countries, were forced to flee their homes and they, too, became refugees. They all - Jews and Arabs - lived in refugee camps, torn away from their homes.

The difference between the two distinct refugee populations was - and still is - that Israel has done its utmost to redeem these Jewish refugees from their misery and to absorb them successfully in Israel, whereas the belligerent Arab States did not lift a finger to redeem their brethren. To wage war - yes, by all means. To help in redeeming and resettling, let alone absorbing their brethren, is another matter altogether.

Today, the Arabs' historic mistake of rejecting resolution 181 is also measured in lives lost in war, parents who bury their children, and pain that has touched us all - Israelis and Arabs.

But Israel will not let the pain that we all have suffered turn into hate. It will not diminish Israel's desire for peace. For history shows that peace can be achieved in the Middle East, like the historic peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan.

How can it be, then, that the debate in these halls embraces a one-sided narrative that promotes and maintains an obsessive and condemnatory focus on Israel? Today's debate undermines the endorsement of the two-state solution. It reflects the reality of an automatic majority that ensures that any debate on the situation in the Middle East shall be unfruitful, destructive, cynical, and hateful.

Peace will require a new direction. It will require truthfulness and courage.

And so I ask our Palestinian neighbors, whether or not we both possess the courage to transform ourselves from soldiers of war into soldiers of peace. Do the Arab States have the courage not only to speak about peace, but to engage with Israel in a serious political and economic manner? Do those in our region have the courage to say publicly that Israel is the legitimate nation-state of the Jewish people? Do the members of this body have the courage to confront Hamas and Hizbullah and all those for whom there is no two-state solution?

Israel, for its part, will choose the path of peace over any course of conflict.

Thus, a few days ago the [government of Israel announced a policy of settlement restraint](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches%2Bby%2BIsraeli%2Bleaders/2009/Statement%2Bby%2BPM_Netanyahu_suspend_new_construction_Judea_Samaria_25-Nov-2009.htm), a policy that includes the suspension of new permits and new construction in the West Bank for a period of ten months. This unprecedented step reflects three simple realities:

First: that Israel wants to re-enter into negotiations with the Palestinians.

Second: that Israel is not only talking about peace, but it is taking painful and effective steps towards it.

And third: that Israel is serious about its intention to pursue peace.

Israel wishes to reach a historic peace agreement and will discuss peace at any time, any where, and without preconditions. We wish to hear the Palestinian Authority say that it, too, will discuss peace at any time, any where, and without preconditions.

Only through negotiations between the parties can we solve the conflict in a complete and comprehensive fashion.

Mr. President,

We now witness efforts to use the Security Council or this General Assembly to promote unilateral declarations. Like the rejection of resolution 181, this could turn into another historic mistake. Such declarations erode the foundations of peace and instead create a situation that will destroy the hope for bilateral negotiations.

Mr. President,

We must also confront the most dangerous threat to peace in our region, namely Iran. [Iran continues to export violence, hatred, and terrorism](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/The%2BIranian%2BThreat/Support%2Bof%2Bterror/) to our region and beyond; the 360 tons of weapons aboard the [Francop](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/The%2BIranian%2BThreat/Support%2Bof%2Bterror/Proof_Iranian_arms_smuggling_to_terrorists_Nov%2B2009.htm) are merely a drop in the ocean.

Iran funds, trains, and supports global terrorism, including Hamas' and Hizbullah's relentless attacks against Israeli men, women and children. Iran must be stopped.

Mr. President,

As our region stands at a critical junction, this body can choose between two paths.

It can indulge in the hatred of yesterday. It can mourn the rejection of resolution 181. It can even promote and applaud unilateral, futile affirmations. It can turn a blind eye to terrorists and their sponsors and justify their repugnant tactics and deadly consequences.

Or it can recognize that the only way towards peace is through bilateral negotiations. It can then celebrate the 29th of November as a joint day of peace for two states, living honorably side by side. For us, Mr. President, there is no other way.

Thank you.

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