

and a candidate for US ambassador to the UN.

UN SESSION ON PALESTINE

From Stockholm, Arafat went to Geneva and addressed the UN General Assembly on December 13th, reiterating the PLO's acceptance of UN resolutions 242 and 338, as a basis for an international peace conference, and its condemnation of all forms of terrorism. After the speech, the General Assembly passed two resolutions acknowledging the proclamation of the Palestinian state, and as of December 15, 1988, using the designation *Palestine* in place of the PLO.

The initial US response to Arafat's speech was lukewarm. Charles Redman said, «Mr. Arafat had made some interesting and positive points but fell short of meeting US conditions for opening a dialogue with the PLO» (UPI, December 14, 1988). Redman added, «Arafat failed to meet any of the conditions laid down by the United States.» Then, on December 14th, in a

180-degree turn, the US State Department declared that the PLO had met the conditions for beginning a dialogue, and that State Department officials would meet with PLO officials in Tunisia. The meeting between the US ambassador in Tunisia and members of the PLO Executive Committee took place a few days later. Although the US placed «terrorism» as the first item on the agenda, the PLO put the question of an international peace conference on top of its agenda. The meeting was basically an introductory one and it is thus too early to draw conclusions about the extent of change in US policy. However, the reversal in the US position on talking to the PLO, although falling short of recognizing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, is a gain, occurring first and foremost as a result of the intifada and the isolation of the US internationally on the question of dealing with the PLO. If the US is genuinely interested in ushering in a new era of

peace to one of the world's most troubled regions, it must persuade 'Israel' to sit down at the negotiations table.

Undoubtedly, Arafat's moderation and flexibility have won him praise in many parts of the world, unveiling once and for all Israeli intransigence and unwillingness to make as much as an overture for peace. The position of the Israeli government has not changed; they will not talk with the PLO no matter what the PLO says. The PLO has been calling for the convening of an international peace conference with the participation of all parties involved. There is consensus on this position in the PLO. The peace conference is the forum for discussing all issues, and naturally concessions will have to be made by both sides. The PLO is being asked to make concessions to 'Israel', while 'Israel' is stepping up the daily killing, house demolition, imprisonment, torture, collective punishment, deportation, etc. The US made it one of its conditions for the PLO to recognize 'Israel' before opening a dialogue with the PLO. 'Israel', for its part, still refuses to recognize what the overwhelming majority of the nations of the world recognize, i.e., that the PLO is the chosen representative of the Palestinian people. The PLO is being asked to renounce «terrorism» while terrorism is the official Israeli policy vis-a-vis the Palestinians. The Israeli answer to the calls for it to cease its aggression, in order to pave the way for negotiations, is an inexorable NO. Instead of asking the Palestinians to stop the intifada, which is in essence self-defense against Israeli terror, the US should ask 'Israel' to make a show of good faith. The only obstacle to getting peace negotiations underway is Israeli intransigence.

At this point, it seems apparent that the only way to pressure 'Israel' to abandon terrorism and its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, is the consolidation and escalation of the intifada, the total boycott of Israeli goods, the refusal to pay taxes and the resolve of the Palestinian people to persevere in their struggle for freedom and independence. After 13 months, the intifada seems to be gaining even more momentum, and the Palestinians are more determined than ever to continue their resistance to occupation, despite the very high price they are paying.

UN Resolution A/43/L.54

In its mid-December special session in Geneva, the UN General Assembly adopted several resolutions on the question of Palestine. Among them was resolution A/43/L.54, which 104 countries voted for, while the US and 'Israel' voted against, and 36 abstained.

The General Assembly,
Having considered the item entitled
«Question of Palestine»,
Recalling its resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, in which, *inter alia*, it called for the establishment of an Arab State and a Jewish State in Palestine,

Mindful of the special responsibility of the United Nations to achieve a just solution to the question of Palestine,

Aware of the proclamation of the State of Palestine by the Palestine National Council in line with General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947 and in exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people,

Affirming the urgent need to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East which, *inter alia*, provides for peaceful coexistence for all States in the region,

Recalling its resolution 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974, on the observer status of the Palestine Liberation

Organization and subsequent relevant resolutions,

1. Acknowledges the proclamation of the State of Palestine by the Palestine National Council on 15 November 1988;

2. Affirms the need to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their sovereignty over their territory occupied since 1967;

3. Decides that, effective as of December 1988, the designation «Palestine» should be used in place of the designation «Palestine Liberation Organization» in the United Nations system without prejudice to the observer status and functions of the Palestine Liberation Organization within the United Nations system in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions and practice;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to take necessary action to implement the present resolution.