

Palestine at the UN



Since the onset of the Palestinian intifada (December 9, 1987), the United Nations has adopted more resolutions concerning the question of Palestine than in any other two-year period since April 1947, when the question was first raised by Britain. Within the first six months of the intifada, three Security Council resolutions were passed condemning the brutal Israeli practices in the occupied territories. The Zionist state has been faced with more international criticism of its human rights violations and total disregard for international law, than in any other period since its admission to the UN on May 11, 1949.

Originally, the UN was viewed by Palestinians as having a largely negative role, primarily due to the fact that

it adopted the plan to partition Palestine, whereafter the projected Palestinian state never materialized. The establishment of UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) in 1949, was seen as an attempt to passify the Palestinian people via refugee aid, without dealing with their national identity. At the time of Israel's admission to the UN, the power base of this international organization was essentially in the hands of the US and other imperialist countries; this picture was to change later.

The positions of the UN General Assembly have changed over the years, primarily due to the change in its composition. Many former colonies achieved independence and became full member nations of the UN, thus

changing the balance of power. Complementing this was the establishment of the non-aligned movement in 1961, which played a role in affecting the character and stands of the UN. In this context, the development of the Palestinian liberation struggle enabled the PLO to influence UN positions on the Middle East.

In November 1974, the UN General Assembly defined the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people in resolution 3236, which have been reaffirmed each year since then; it also granted observer status to the PLO. UN agencies also benefit the Palestinian people. As of late 1983, UNRWA was aiding 1.9 million Palestinians, and employing a staff of 17,000, most of them Palestinians. UNESCO has supported beneficial programs for Palestinian children, while it was in the framework of the UN that the meetings of non-governmental organizations on the Question of Palestine, began.

44th session

The 44th session of the UN General Assembly, which convened its essential debates from September 26th until October 12th, spent three weeks listening to speakers from approximately 154 nations, and reviewing the past period's events with the aim of arriving at international consensus.

Many of the topics addressed in New York were on the agenda only weeks before at the ninth non-aligned, 102-nation conference which began on September 4th. The topics on both events' agendas were varied: The Middle East, the environment, international debts, the war on drugs, Namibia's transition to independence and so on. UN committees and subcommittees also convened.

In light of the current changes on the international level between the US and the Soviet Union, the 159 diplomats and officials making up the UN General Assembly looked forward to making progress on issues previously left unresolved. ▶