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## After the UN resolution on Jerusalem

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We have all been pleased over the vote of the United Nations General Assembly on Thursday that overwhelmingly rejected any change in the legal status of Jerusalem in response to the decision of US President Donald Trump to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of "Israel" and his intention to move the US embassy to the holy city. A number of 128 member states voted in favor of the UN General Assembly's resolution (to support the longstanding international consensus that the status of Jerusalem can only be settled as an agreed final issue in a peace deal), nine countries voted against it (including the United States and Israel), and thirty-five countries abstained (including five EU states).

The UN vote was actually 'a slap in the face' for Trump. The resolution was a historical move as it did not only reject the US administration's decision on Jerusalem, but also because it came after the threats of Trump and US Envoy to the United Nations Nikki Haley to "take note" of the countries that may support the UN resolution and to cut US aid provided to them.

***["They take hundreds of millions of dollars and even billions of dollars, and then they vote against us. Well, we're watching those votes. Let them vote against us. We'll save a lot. We don't care," Trump said ... "The president will be watching this vote carefully and has requested I report back on those countries who voted against us," Haley wrote, according to the AP, adding that: "We will take note of each and every vote on this issue."]***

Trump's threats could only influence small "marginal" states that we have never heard of their names before. Reportedly, the total population of these countries does not exceed 87,000 (Togo, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Marshall Islands, Guatemala and Honduras).

In my opinion, we should be proud of this UN resolution as a moral slap to the US president who deals with international politics with the logic of free wrestling and trade, the two areas where he worked before moving to the White House. However, that should not make us overlook the following facts:

**First:** The UN resolution cannot be considered a victory for the Palestinian cause, as it only prevented a resounding defeat and a great scandal if Trump was able to block it.



**Second:** The resolution of the UN General Assembly - like all its resolutions - is not binding, but rather a recommendation, and therefore it is likely to be added to the UN previous resolutions that have not been and will not be implemented, especially those relating to the Palestinian question.

**Third:** The result of the vote does not mean that all the countries that voted for the UN resolution are committed to the Palestinian right, or defend it. In fact, most of these countries - especially the European countries – disagree with Trump’s decision on the timing, rhetoric, style, and the expected negative effects on the "peace process", not on its content. These states are committed to the two-state solution as negotiated (and you can imagine the possible outcomes of negotiations) and nothing more.

**Fourth:** The UN resolution is positive in rejecting Trump’s decision on Jerusalem, but the content of the resolution is not so as it is talking about only "East Jerusalem" and the process of settlement, referring to a number of previous UN resolutions that had negative repercussions on the Palestinian issue.

But that does not mean that the resolution is useless or that it is unreliable. In fact, it needs a "vision" based on a clear will rather than a "political strabismus".

The "political strabismus" is to imagine that the resolution of the UN Security Council embarrassed Washington or pressured it to the extent that it could reverse its decision, and therefore it may “resume” its former status as a mediator in the peace process between the Palestinians and “Israel”. We should not also think that the UN resolution has pushed the United States into the corner and "isolated" it; and therefore the Palestinian Authority (PA) should search for new "mediators" on the international arena, such as Russia or China, as declared by some PA leaders.

The "political strabismus" means assuming the integrity of the settlement process from Madrid to Oslo and until now (with all its stages, steps, commitments and repercussions), and restricting the problem to Trump’s last decision on Jerusalem. The solution is not confined to "replacing" the US mediator, assuming that this is possible or that any of the parties can enforce it.

The sound vision is that the UN General Assembly’s resolution on Jerusalem is a breathtaking opportunity to build on in a correct and effective manner. The resolution has political and legal dimensions that cannot be underestimated and should be relied on, but not on the basis of seeking irreparable reform, or as an opportunity to improve



the terms of the settlement process, or for bargaining with Washington on a new round of negotiations.

What is needed is that the Palestinian Authority should renounce Oslo's political and security commitments and reduce its security grip on the Palestinian street, in favor of the Israeli occupation on the one hand; and the sincere, genuine and well-organized approach towards international institutions and the signing of their protocols on the other. This could allow the criminalization and prosecution of the Israeli occupation, and the protection of Jerusalem from the consequences of Trump's decision.

The real action on the ground of the Palestinian people in Jerusalem and the West Bank in particular is the only way that could directly pressurize the Israeli occupation and its US ally. Despite the weakness of the Palestinian Authority, yet it has important political cards that cannot be underestimated.

**It is not about rhetorical speeches, but we need practical steps at several levels, including:**

- Lifting sanctions on the Gaza Strip,
- Activating the internal Palestinian reconciliation process,
- Easing the security grip on the occupied West Bank, and
- Bringing all Palestinians together to evaluate the situation, plan for the future, and activate the international legal and political track without delay.

The Palestinian leadership must not deal with the issue of Jerusalem as a conduit for its survival or an opportunity to renew its eroded legitimacy. The Palestinian leaders should defend the Palestinian issue as much as possible out of sincerity, patriotism, or at least pragmatism. Otherwise, the PA leadership must step aside and leave room for the Palestinian people, its political forces, currents, elites, and youth, who are able to readjust the compass and accumulate the struggle for Jerusalem and the cause.

Ghassan Kanafani – a Palestinian author and a leading member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine who was assassinated by Israeli Mossad on 8 July 1972 – said that the failed defense of a case should lead to changing the defender, not the mediator, which is required for those who are still incommensurate with the level of the event and the issue, because of their unwillingness or inability or both, otherwise they will be a new target – after Israeli occupation – for the people's uprising at any time.