

120 Countries at UN Condemn Israel Over Gaza Violence

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The UN General Assembly on Wednesday adopted by a strong majority of 120 countries an Arab-backed resolution condemning Israel for Palestinian deaths in Gaza and rejected a US bid to put the blame on Hamas.

At least 129 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire during protests near the border with Gaza that began at the end of March. No Israelis have died.

The resolution put forward by Algeria and Turkey on behalf of Arab and Muslim countries won 120 votes in the 193-member assembly, with 8 votes against and 45 abstentions.

An amendment presented by the United States condemning Hamas for "inciting violence" along the border with Gaza failed to garner the two-third majority needed for adoption.

Addressing the assembly, US Ambassador Nikki Haley dismissed the resolution as biased against Israel and accused Arab countries of trying to score political points at home by seeking to condemn Israel at the United Nations.

"For some, attacking Israel is their favorite political sport. That's why we are here today," said Haley.

"I wish everyone supporting this one-sided resolution would put as much energy into encouraging President Abbas to the negotiating table," she said.

The resolution deplored Israel's use of "excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force" against Palestinian civilians and called for protection measures for Palestinians in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

Arab countries backing the measure turned to the General Assembly after the United States used its veto in the Security Council to block the resolution on June 1.

Unlike the Security Council, resolutions adopted by the assembly are non-binding and there is no veto.

UN chief to propose protection

The resolution tasks UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres with the drafting of proposals for an "international protection mechanism" for the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

These could range from setting up an observer mission to a full-blown peacekeeping force, but action on any option would require backing from the Security Council, where the United States has veto power.

Palestinian Ambassador Riyad Mansour dismissed the US amendments blaming Hamas as "games

and gimmicks" and urged ambassadors not to be "fooled" by the US proposal.

"We are asking for a simple thing," Mansour told the assembly. "We want our civilian population to be protected."

Turkey's Ambassador Feridun Hadi Sinirlioglu defended the resolution, saying it was "about taking sides with international law" and showing the Palestinians that the world "does care about their suffering."

Taking the podium, Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon assailed the measure as an "attempt to take away our basic right to self-defense." He warned ambassadors that by supporting the resolution "you are empowering Hamas."

The US amendment condemning Hamas received 62 votes in favor, with 58 against and 42 abstentions. The United States sought to challenge the ruling requiring a two-thirds majority but that was defeated in a separate vote.

"We had more countries on the right side than the wrong side," Haley said in a statement.

The General Assembly last held a similarly contentious vote on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in December, when it rejected President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the US embassy there.

Haley had warned at the time that Washington was "taking names" of countries that supported the resolution. That vote was 128 to 9, with 35 abstentions.

Backed by Arab countries, the Palestinians had lobbied to win as many votes as those cast in support of the Jerusalem resolution.

[To their great shame] Australia, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Solomon Islands and Togo joined Israel and the United States in voting against the resolution.

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