**International Law Backs The Trump Golan Policy**

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President Trump’s recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights was met with condemnation from the European Union and others. Leaders called the move “invalid,” “illegitimate” and “absolutely worthless.” United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called Israel’s 1981 annexation of the Golan “null and void and without international legal effect.” These assertions are baseless.

Virtually every nation cited U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, which outlined a framework for achieving peace in the Middle East. The preamble speaks of “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war.” Yet President Trump’s Golan proclamation is entirely consistent with Resolution 242.

Resolution 242 was heavily negotiated and agreed to in 1967 by all but one of the warring parties in the Six-Day War—Syria, which controlled the Golan before the conflict. Damascus stayed on the sidelines until 1973 when, with its Arab allies, it launched and lost the Yom Kippur War. After that defeat, Syria signed on to Resolution 338, which made 242 applicable to all—the only substantive resolution to which all combatants have agreed.

Resolution 242 calls on the parties to negotiate a just and lasting peace, one that recognizes the right of all countries, including Israel, to live “within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.” It provides that Israel would withdraw from some—but not necessarily all—territory captured in 1967 in keeping with that objective. Some of Israel’s former enemies pursued peace in good faith, and Israel has withdrawn from more than 88% of the territory it captured in 1967—most notably the Sinai Peninsula, pursuant to the 1979 Camp David Accords with Egypt.

Syria is a different story. In word and deed, Damascus has for 52 years rejected the negotiating framework of Resolution 242. It has maintained a state of war with Israel since Israel became independent in 1948. It is a client of Iran and one of the most brutal regimes on earth. By affirming Israel’s sovereignty over the Golan Heights, the president has afforded Israel the only secure and recognized boundary that can exist under the circumstances—the objective of Resolution 242.

The preamble to Resolution 242 does not exist in a vacuum. It is part of a broader framework in which the parties work to establish a negotiated peace. If it were absolute, there would be no purpose to the substantive compromises for which the resolution calls. Critically, Resolutions 242 and 338 did not preclude Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights as an outcome of the contemplated process.

Bashar Assad, one of the most cruel and brutal dictators of the last century, remains in power. If Israel doesn’t maintain control of the Golan, Iran, the world’s largest state sponsor of terror, or one of its proxies, will gain the strategic high ground. The world, and especially the EU, faces an easy choice: a dictator of a non-functioning state or a peaceful and democratic ally. They still have time to choose the latter, and we urge them to do so.

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