Eight things to know about the UNGA condemnation of Israel in 2020

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The [UN General Assembly](https://www.jpost.com/tags/united-nations-general-assembly) approved 17 pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli resolutions in December, as part of what has become an annual end of the year ritual by the 193-member body, where the Palestinians have an automatic majority of support.

To put this number in perspective, the UNGA approved only six country-specific resolutions for human rights situations in the rest of the world.

 When speaking of UN bias on Israel, focus is often on Geneva or Paris.

The former is the seat of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva and the latter hosts the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

But it’s the UN in New York, particularly the General Assembly, that often generates the most activity.

Countries that support Israel by voting with it or abstaining at the UNHRC or UNESCO, do not necessarily follow that trend in New York.

Resolutions with language neutralized in Geneva or Paris, such as ignoring Jewish ties to Jerusalem’s Temple Mount, known to Muslims as al-Haram al-Sharif, are still approved by the UNGA.

The Trump administration’s strong advocacy on behalf of the Jewish state at the UN, combined with the work of Israel’s Foreign Ministry, former ambassador Danny Danon and the current Ambassador Gilad Erdan were not able to stem the tide of anti-Israel sentiment, but they have been able to diminish it slightly.

Here are eight things to know about these texts.

1. Number of anti-Israel resolutions dropped

There were 17 texts pro-Palestinian or anti-Israeli resolutions approved this year, down from 18 last year and 21 in 2018. This does not reflect a change in attitude toward Israel. Rather, it is a testament of success of the Israeli argument that there are too many resolutions against Israel with redundant texts.

Of the 17 texts, only 13 dealt with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One called for Israel to give up its undeclared nuclear weapons. A second spoke of Israeli culpability in a 2006 oil spill along the Lebanese shore. Two others call for Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights, which it captured from Syria during the 1967 Six-Day war and on which it applied sovereignty in 1981. The Trump administration has recognized that sovereignty.

Among those on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, only three specifically deal with Israeli actions against the Palestinians.

Others deal with Palestinian sovereignty and financial assistance to the Palestinians. One affirms the work of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees and four others affirm the work of pro-Palestinian committees at the UN.

All the pro-Palestinian resolutions operate out of the context that Israel “occupies” the territory over the pre-1967 lines and that it must withdraw from that territory.

2. Four annual texts that did not come before the UNGA

Four resolutions were not voted on this December.

This included a resolution that was approved last year but dropped in 2020 that was called “Persons Displaced as a Result of June 1967 and Subsequent Hostilities.”

It calls on “all persons displaced” as a result of the 1967 Six Day War and other hostilities after that to be able to “return to their homes or former places of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967.”

Three others which were dropped in 2019 did not resurface this year. One of those was titled “Comprehensive, Just and Lasting Peace in the Middle East” which affirmed a two-state solution along the pre-1967 lines. Many of the resolutions affirm this point.

A second affirmed the applicability of the Geneva Convention, which speaks of war crimes, to Israeli actions in territory the IDF captured in the 1967 Six-Day War, such as east Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights.

The third resolution, on Jerusalem, disavows Israel’s connection to its capital and speaks of the Temple Mount solely by its Muslim name – al-Haram al-Sharif.

It called “for respect for the historic status quo at the holy places of Jerusalem, including the Haram al-Sharif, in word and in practice, and urges all sides to work immediately and cooperatively to defuse tensions and halt all provocations, incitement and violence at the holy sites in the City.”

It is possible that this resolution has not been permanently dropped and could return in the first half of 2021.

3. Fewer nations supported the anti-Israel resolutions

The number of nations that supported anti-Israeli texts dropped slightly in 2020.

The increase in support for Israel represented only a small fraction of the votes. What was striking was that the increase was applicable to 13 of the resolutions.

In two of the resolutions, one on the Palestinian right to self-determination and one on nuclear disarmament, Israel lost support. In a third resolution, support remained on par. One of the resolutions was passed by consensus.

4. The resolution with the most support for Israel

The resolution with the most support for Israel affirmed the work of the special committee to investigate alleged Israeli human rights abuses and which condemned Israel’s “occupation,” was approved 76-14, with 83 abstentions. In 2019 it passed 82-11, 78.

In both instances, the number of countries that supported the resolution was less than half of 193 UNGA members that could vote on the text. More nations in 2020 abstained or voted against it, than approved it.

5. The resolution with the least support for Israel

The text that reflected the least support for Israel was the resolution on financial support for Palestinian refugees, which was approved 169-2, with seven abstentions. Last year, the same resolution passed 170-2, also with seven abstentions.

6. How did the five world powers vote?

The US supported Israel straight across the board, while China voted against it in all cases.

Russia also voted against Israel, except when it abstained on three pro-Palestinian resolutions.

Both France and the UK voted against Israel eleven times, with France abstaining on five other resolutions and the UK abstaining on four and voting once in Israel’s favor, rejecting one of the two resolutions calling on Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights.

7. Which countries support Israel the most?

The United States is the only country to vote with Israel on all the resolutions. Those who stand with Israel on these texts, either do so to protest UNGA bias against Israel as reflected in the large number of the resolutions, so that they even oppose texts that include principle points they may believe in, such as financial assistance to the Palestinian people or the Palestinian right to self-determination.

Three other countries that did not support the resolutions were the Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Australia. Unlike the US, however, they both abstained and or voted no. Canada had been in that category, but last year it changed one of its votes to a yes, for the Palestinians, while voting no, or abstaining on all others.

Some countries chose to support neither side in some of the resolutions by abstaining or being absent. Israel counts those votes as a nod of support, even though they allow the resolutions to pass.

Cameroon abstained on all the resolutions, Comoros, Somalia were absent for all of the votes.

8. UNGA affirms Temple Mount as solely a Muslim site

Israel has been able to neutralize a Palestinian and Arab drive at UNESCO to label the most holy site in Judaism solely by its Muslim name, al-Haram al-Sharif.

But it has not been successful in New York, where a resolution on Israeli practices affecting human rights passed 147-10, with 16 abstentions, down from 157-9 the previous year.

The text stated, “Gravely concerned by the tensions and violence in the recent period throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and including with regard to the holy places of Jerusalem, including the Haram al-Sharif, and deploring the loss of innocent civilian life.”