

THE INTERNET JERUSALEM POST

Preventing another Durban

Emmanuel Navon

November, 27 2001

(November 27) - Two months have passed since the Orwellian Durban Conference, but the Arab manipulation of the UN to delegitimize Israel is not an exercise of the past. The Arab states are now intent on turning the upcoming meeting of the High Contracting Parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention next week into another anti-Israel fest.

The hijacking of the Durban conference by the Arab states and their allies confirmed the need to prevent the use of the UN as a tool of political propaganda. The history of the world organization proves that only financial pressures can help in achieving this goal.

From the early 1960s, the Arab states discovered that the UN was the ideal forum for fighting Israel on the diplomatic front. Soviet and Chinese permanent membership and veto power at the Security Council enabled the use of this body to harass Israel and prevent its "interference" with Arab violations of international law and human rights. The voting system of the General Assembly (one country-one vote) created a majority composed of Third World and pro-Soviet countries exploited by the Arab states for the passing of their anti-Israel resolutions.

The manipulation of the UN by the Arab states generated an avalanche of obnoxious resolutions, which culminated in the 1975 resolution equating Zionism with racism. The effects of the "automatic majority" had repercussions on the entire UN system. The agenda of specialized agencies and international conferences was systematically diverted to lambaste Israel.

Special committees and agencies were created with UN money to help the PLO implement its agenda.

The UN's 50th anniversary, in 1995, was celebrated in an optimistic atmosphere: The Cold War was over and the Middle East was seemingly heading toward peace. Many countries, including Israel, called for a reform of the UN in order to adapt it to the alleged "New World Order" and to the no less alleged "New Middle East." Israel logically claimed that its pariah state status (which prevents its representation in UN bodies such as the Security Council and the International Court of Justice) had no more *raison d'être*, and that the numerous UN bodies created under the pressure of the Arab states in the context of the Cold War and of the Arab-Israeli conflict could now be abolished.

The Oslo process notwithstanding, Israel's proposals were rebuffed by the Arab states, and the very concept of "UN reform" became but another mind-game for useless bureaucrats. The tone and atmosphere of the Durban conference took us back to the 1970s, when Yasser Arafat was praised for calling for Israel's destruction from the General Assembly's podium in 1974. In his Durban speech, Arafat claimed that Israel was the last outpost of colonialism and that colonialism must disappear. You can guess the conclusion.

Durban also proved that counting on "moderate" Arab states to tame Arafat's rhetoric and intentions is an illusion. Of all Arab states, it was Egypt that torpedoed the Norwegian compromise proposal, which would have enabled the US and Israel not to walk out from the conference.

The "automatic majority" prevents the implementation of reforms aimed at putting an end to the political hijacking of the UN. There is, however, one very efficient tool that the US Congress can use to prevent the hijacking of the UN by autocratic regimes: money. Ironically, the United States finances a quarter of the budget of an organization that is used as a forum of anti-American and anti-Israel rhetoric by countries that control the General Assembly and barely contribute to the UN

budget.

By threatening to bankrupt the UN, the US Congress forced it in the past to reform itself, and the US was able in 1991 to demand the repeal of the resolution equating Zionism with racism.

As long as the Arab world refuses to let go of its manipulation of the General Assembly, hurting the UN in the pocket is the only way to prevent the repetition of the Durban farce in Geneva, or elsewhere.

(The writer is a lecturer in political science at Bar-Ilan University and CEO of Navon Consulting.)



This article can also be read at <http://www.jpost.com/Editions/2001/11/27/Opinion/Opinion.38824.html>

[Back to the article](#)

Copyright © 1995-2001 The Jerusalem Post - <http://www.jpost.com>