



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN  
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE

برلمان البحر الأبيض المتوسط

## Notes on the 9453<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the UN Security Council

### “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”

*New York, Online*

*25 October 2023*

*Internal note*

*Disclaimer: this background note was prepared by PAM researchers in their personal capacity. The opinion expressed in the note are the author’s own and do not reflect the view of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)*

**Context:** *Member States of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) intervened before voting on the Gaza Israel Resolution S/2023/792<sup>1</sup>, put forward by the United States (U.S.), and the Gaza-Israel Resolution S/2023/795, put forward by the Russian Federation. No agreement was reached among Member States of the UNSC regarding the approval of one or the other resolution. While there were common grounds of understanding with regard to the need to protect civilians from both sides and allow free access to humanitarian aid, there were substantial disagreements. States disagreed, on the one hand, about the condemnation of the attacks by part of Hamas as acts of terrorism. On the other hand, there were different considerations regarding Israel’s right to self-defense, the proportionate use of force, and the consideration of Israel as an occupying power. Overall, the meeting exposed the embedded geopolitical dynamics of the Israel-Hamas War and the different positions of the UNSC Member States.*

Resolution S/2023/792, put forward by the U.S. – key points:

1. Condemnation of Hamas’ terrorist attacks
2. Goal of depriving Hamas of weapons and funding
3. Protect Israel’s right to self-defense and compliance with International Law
4. Unlimited and safe access to humanitarian aid

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/unifeed/asset/3126/3126316/>

5. Solution where two states can coexist

*Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, PR of the U.S. to the UNSC*

- Diplomacy must take further steps forward. Thanks to the recent diplomatic efforts by part of the UN, the U.S., Egypt and Israel, humanitarian aid could reach Gaza. Everything possible must be done to meet the needs of the Palestinians.
- Moreover, the protection of people fleeing, UN facilities and personnel, and humanitarian personnel, must be guaranteed and ensured.
- **Hostages kept by Hamas must be freed**, and a vote for the subject Resolution would **send the message that hostages must be released immediately and without conditions**.
- According to the America PR to the UNSC, the U.S. had forged a consensus about a balanced and strong Resolution. The U.S. efforts aimed to craft a Resolution that could enjoy wide support and that could bring together all the Member States of the UNSC, reflecting the diplomatic efforts that had taken place within the Council.
- The Resolution:
  - condemns the terrorist attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups
  - defends the right of self-defense and obliges countries to comply with the International Law
  - defends all medical and humanitarian personnel
  - guarantees access to humanitarian aid
  - enhances concrete steps to avoid the expansion of the conflict
  - deprives Hamas of weapons and funding to spread terror
  - fosters a solution where two democratic States live in peace, side by side

*H.E. Vasily Nebenzya, PR of the Russian Federation to the UNSC*

- The UN has been unable to state a clear position, despite the shocking figures.
- The Russian Federation calls for the adoption of a ceasefire, not supported by most members of the Council.
- In the position of Members States in the UNSC, **according to Russia, narrow self-interests have prevailed over humanitarian aims and the willingness to avoid a disaster**.
- The American Delegation has rejected the opportunity to discuss with other Member States. In the proposed Resolution there is **no mention of a ceasefire and no condemnation of the attacks on civilians in Gaza**. For these reasons, the UNSC **cannot accept this Resolution. It would mine its credibility**.
- According to the Russian Federation, **the right to self-defense is inadmissible when talking about an occupying power, referring to Israel**.
- The proposed Resolution is considered by Russia as an attempt to serve the purposes and interests of one country in the Council.

*The outcome of votes: the draft was not adopted because it was vetoed by two Permanent Members*

- 10 votes in favor
- 3 against, Russia, UAE, China

*Ambassador Zhang Jun, PR of China to the UNSC*

- China voted against the Resolution and its position is based on facts, law, justice and in support of the Arab countries.
- The draft fails to distinguish between right and wrong, and it has no call for a ceasefire. China wants the Council to play a responsible role. **However, this draft is evasive about ending the fight and does not call for a ceasefire.** At present, a ceasefire is not just a diplomatic tool, but it is rather about the life and death of people.
- China condemns all violence against civilians and calls for diplomatic efforts to release hostages and stop the indiscriminate and **unbalanced use of force by part of Israel. This draft selectively applies International Law in favor of one country.**
- **China does not deny Israel's security concerns, though it calls for the equal consideration of Palestine's security concerns.**
- **The draft ignores that Palestinians have been occupied for a long time.** It departs from the spirit of the UN's previous Resolutions and endorses the idea of civilizations war. Moreover, **it does not consider the two-States solution.**

*Ambassador Ferit Hoxha, PR of Albania to the UNSC*

- The Draft Resolution put forward by the U.S. was far from perfect, according to Albania. However, under current circumstances, it would have been good enough to have a positive impact and could have **been a good response to the current needs of Palestinians and the urgency of condemning terrorism.** The rejection, instead, does not improve the situation for civilians and humanitarian workers on the ground.

*Votes on Resolution S/2023/795, put forward by the Russian Federation: not adopted for the lack of a sufficient number of votes in favor.*

*Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, PR of the U.S. to the UNSC*

- According to the U.S., with its text, **Russia is attempting to score political points** rather than addressing the needs of Palestinians and Israeli civilians.
- In response to the Russia text, the U.S. affirms to be ready to collaborate with Member States who are *genuinely* willing to collaborate for peace.

*Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh, PR of the UAE to the UNSC*

- Intervening quite cautiously, the UAE stated that their vote was *strictly* on the merits of the text.
- According to the UAE, there is a need for an immediate ceasefire, fuel for hospitals, water provision and humanitarian aid.
- The UAE assigns the same value to the lives of Palestinians and Israelis, affirming the substantiality of not having any hierarchy on civilian lives.

- The forced displacement and evacuation procedure from northern Gaza is clear. There is **no ambiguity about Gaza being an occupied country, and this must be acknowledged by the International Community.**

*Ambassador Barbara Woodward, PR of the U.K. to the UNSC*

- According to the UK, the text would have allowed humanitarian aid to come in and the release of hostages, while condemning Hamas' terrorist attacks.
- Russian Resolution was voted against by the UK for its failure to recognize Israel's right to self-defense.
- There is a grave crisis in the Middle East. However, no consultation was held by Russia before putting forward such a resolution, signaling that it was not a real attempt to let the UNSC speak with one voice. The UK is committed to working to a balanced text condemning Hamas, defending Israel's right to self-defense and protecting civilians.

*Ambassador Ishikane Kimihiro, PR of Japan to the UNSC*

- According to Japan, while the focus should be on humanitarian issues, it is important that all Member States of the UNSC recognize the right to self-defense according to International Law.

*PR of Switzerland to the UNSC*

- According to Switzerland, the priorities are the protection of civilians, guaranteeing access to safe humanitarian aid and **preventing a spill-over regionalization of the conflict.**
- **Permanent Members of the Council are given a veto power to which some responsibilities are attached. Switzerland highlights that Members States expect Permanent Members to exercise their responsibility to pave the way to a joint solution.**

*Ambassador Nicolas de Rivière, PR of France to the UNSC*

- France acknowledges that the situation in the Middle East is dangerous and that the conflict may spill-over.
- **France unambiguously condemned the attack on Israel and called for the release of hostages and safe and unlimited access to humanitarian aid for the people in Gaza.**
- Israel has the right to self-defense respecting international law.
- France supports a ceasefire and voted against the Russian Resolution because it fails to account for Hamas attacks as acts of terrorism.

*H.E. Gilad Herdan, PR of Israel to the UNSC*

- While thanking the U.S. for their Resolution, **Israel declares to be shocked about the rejection of the resolution and the unwillingness by part of Members States of the UNSC to condemn terrorism.**

- Israel proves vexed about the questioning of its self-defense. Indeed, **Israel affirms that had such a terrorist attack on civilians happened to any other country, he was sure that they would have reacted even worse than Israel, explicitly referring to Russia.**

*Ambassador Zhang Jun, PR of China to the UNSC*

- China affirms that having a debate with Israel was not its goal, and warns Israel that **China represents the wrong rival target.** In fact, since the beginning, **China has condemned attacks on civilians on both sides.**
- China reiterated the idea that it does not deny Israel's security concerns, despite equally acknowledging those of Palestine.
- According to China, the rights of Palestinians have not been safeguarded. The only way to do so is the 2-States solution, which has not been put forward. According to China, both sides must work for peace and collaborate to live in harmony.

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