

Priorities of diplomatic action after Palestine's UN upgrade

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Introduction:

After Palestine was granted a status upgrade at the UN to non-member observer state on November 29, 2012, it has become imperative to discuss the ramifications of this achievement from various aspects. This includes international relations, charters and covenants and Palestine's membership in international agencies. It also includes discussion at the political, legal and security level in addition to issues pertaining to organization and structure towards the realization of a Palestinian state, deterrence of Israeli occupation practices and holding Israel legally accountable.

Discussion:

It has become necessary to take advantage of this diplomatic achievement and build on it. An overall framework is necessary to discuss what is needed in this context, including building up diplomatic and political support for Palestine internationally so this can be the first step to gaining full membership. If this is not achieved, the achievement will become nothing more than a slogan and a commemoration date, thus losing its credibility.

As a result of this achievement, the importance of which lies in the international recognition of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, has been for Israel to step up its settlement activity in the West Bank, especially in Jerusalem. It rushed to approve the E1 settlement plan, which will ultimately separate Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, confiscated thousands of dunams of Palestinian land and gave free reign to its settlers to attack Palestinians and their properties under the protection of the army. This is not to mention Israel's decision to illegally withhold Palestinian tax returns which it collects on the PA's behalf.

Empowering the internal situation

In tandem with a diplomatic move, the internal structure must be rectified so that this move can be based on strong foundations that will also help the push towards reconciliation. This needs a political will demonstrated from all parties. The Central Committee must convene along with the higher leadership committee in order to discuss changes in the concept and role of the PA and to re-identify its functions, especially the external ones. An alternative credible program must also be set up if reconciliation is not reached.

Hence, joining international organizations, treaties and agencies must come within a framework agreed on by the PLO and in a matter that serves Palestine as a state. Furthermore, internal UN resolutions must also be put into effect, including Resolution 1325 stipulating the protection of women in areas of conflict, which we must ensure reach decision-making positions. The same applies for the CEDAW, the convention of the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Strategic balances

It is important to find practical steps in order to quickly take advantage of the momentum which accompanied the recognition of a Palestinian state; we must amend the balance of powers strategically and rectify the legal foundations for the political process, which can be achieved at two levels:

First: the negotiating foundations, and continuing to insist on the current terms for returning to negotiations while working on developing them further. These include a halt to settlement construction, the release of prisoners, especially long-serving ones and shifting the balances of power strategically on the ground. That is, the entire political process and its framework must be changed by conditioning negotiations with the implementation of international resolutions and not negotiating over them.

Second: Using tools of international law to hold Israel accountable and make it stand trial for war crimes it has committed in addition to its violation of international law; we must use these tools within a strategy of putting real pressure on Israel to end the occupation.

Security coordination with Israel must also be halted; rules of engagement with settlers must also be imposed within a security context in which Israel operates as well. This is through legal measures that focus on the illegitimacy of their presence in the West Bank.

Recommendations:

1. Formulating a plan to join international organizations and finding the purpose each one can serve to the benefit of Palestinian interests in confronting the occupation on the ground and which will strengthen it internationally.
2. Using tools of international law to isolate Israel legally, including the Geneva Convention, the International convention against racial discrimination and the Rome Statute.
3. Expediting the reconciliation process and overcoming all of the negative signs in this regard, followed by a call for elections.
4. Ending security coordination with Israel; imposing the rules of engagement with settlers through legal measures that focus on the illegitimacy of their presence in the West Bank and their confiscation of Palestinian land and resources.
5. Pushing the international community into a battle of excluding Israel and isolating it internationally; bringing in women's movements, popular movements and organizations and civil society into the battle, whether through boycotting Israeli products or other forms of resistance.
6. Raising Palestine's representation in friendly countries and addressing countries that refrain to do so or those who opposed the vote in the UN General Assembly on a Palestinian state, aimed at supporting Palestinian positions in the future.
7. Convening the central committee and the higher leadership committee in order to discuss changing the concept and role of the PA and redefining its functions, especially the external ones.
8. Inevitably declaring the failure of the Oslo Accords and breaking away from them, especially since the agreement did not specify beforehand that it would end in a two-state solution; rather it indicated to an open transitional period.
9. Call for the convention of an international conference based on international legitimacy and law in order to implement international resolutions rather than negotiate over them.