

164 Summerhaven Drive
East Syracuse, New York 13057

Rewarding Nonviolent Actions in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, is circulating a draft resolution to members of the U.N. General Assembly that would upgrade the Palestinians' status in the U.N. General Assembly from "observer entity" to non-member "observer state," similar to the status given to the Vatican. The U.S. government should support Abbas's commitment to make progress nonviolently. In conflicts marked by violence and threats of violence, attention should be given to nonviolent actions. Instead of just saying "no" to the resolution to raise the Palestinian Authority's U.N. status, the U.S. should try to negotiate a more acceptable resolution or simply abstain from voting.

Since the resolution is presently likely to pass, this move would not greatly change the outcome. But indicating support for the Palestinian Authority's approach would strengthen the standing of Abbas among Palestinians. It would also strengthen the position of Israelis who wish their government were more willing to enter negotiations.

We believe that the U.S. government should creatively use this effort to help renew peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the near future. Negotiations to finally bring about a Palestinian state alongside Israel are urgently needed, as many Arab countries are undergoing profound changes and violence erupts between Israel and Hamas. Without such a peace, neither Jews nor Palestinians will be able to live in democratic and secure homelands of their own.

The present situation is unsustainable and extremely dangerous for all peoples in the Middle East; certainly, matters can degenerate quickly. Of course, there are great limits to what the U.S. government can do. However, inaction simply allows the agenda to be set by the extremists. The few opportunities that arise should be creatively pursued in order to empower the moderates to bring about a more peaceful Middle East.

By members of Syracuse Area Middle East Dialogue (SAMED)

November 21, 2012

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