UN General Assembly on the Creation of a Palestinian State

Brief historical context of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

During the British Mandate in Palestine which operated from 1920 until 1948, the area experienced the rise of two major nationalist movements, one among the Jews and the other among the Arabs. After years of fighting between them and Israel declaring the establishment of its state over these territories, the first Arab-Israeli war broke out in 1948. In 1949, and after winning the war, Israel signed separate peace agreements with Egypt on February 24th, Lebanon on March 23rd, Transjordan on April 3rd, and Syria on July 20th. The armistice lines saw Israel holding about 78% of Mandate Palestine. Relations between Israel and its neighbours had never normalized and as a result, on June 5th 1967, Israel launched a pre-emptive airstrike against Egypt which resulted in another war between Israel on one side and Egypt, Syria and Jordan on the other. By June 10, Israel had completed its final offensive and had seized the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank including Jerusalem and the Golan heights. Overall Israel’s territory grew by a factor of three and consequently about one million Arabs placed under Israel’s direct control.

Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)

In 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organization was founded with the purpose of the liberation of Palestine through armed struggle. Yasser Arafat chaired the PLO executive committee from 1969 until his death in 2004. In October 1974, the Arab League recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of all the Palestinian people. The UN then followed suit in November of the same year to recognize the PLO as competent on all matters conserving the questions of Palestine and representing all Palestinian people living in the occupied territories and abroad, estimated to be around 11 million. As a result the PLO was recognized as an observer organization in the UN. The Palestinian Liberation Organization was considered by the United States and Israel to be a terrorist organization until the Madrid conference in 1991. In 1993, the PLO recognized Israel’s right to exist in peace, accepted UN Security Council resolution 242, 338 which dealt with land partition and rejected violence and terrorism. In response, Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of all Palestinian people.

Present members of the PLO include Fatah, Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Palestinian People’s Party, the Arab Liberation Front, the Palestinian Democratic Union, the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front and the Palestinian Arab Front.

While the PLO leaders were living in exile, occasional and spontaneous acts of resistance were occurring in the West Bank and Gaza. After Israel pursued an Iron fist policy of deportation, demolition of homes, collective punishment, curfews and suppression of political institutions, as
well as the killing of four Palestinian workers by an army truck, the Palestinians revolted in what is referred to as the first Intifada. The uprising that started in 1987 ended with the hope that the negotiations that were happening between the PLO and the Israeli government in Oslo would result eventually in the establishment of a Palestinian State.

Oslo agreement

The world was seeing what was happening between the Palestinians and the Israelis and wanted to find a lasting solution. As a result of continued pressure by the international community on both Israelis and Palestinians to end their conflict, secret negotiations between the two parties were held in Oslo to reach a peace agreement. The negotiations were facilitated by Norway and hosted by the Fafo Institute in order to maintain secrecy in case the negotiations were unsuccessful in reaching a final agreement. The negotiations were completed on August 20th 1993 and on 13th of September 1993, a public ceremony held at the White House was held to sign the documents. The ceremony was attended by PLO chairman Yasser Arafat and then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin as well as many other international presidents. The accord was to be an interim solution for five years until both parties can reach permanent status negotiations that would address issues like Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and border security. The Oslo Accord marked the start of the Oslo process which aimed to achieve a peace treaty based on the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. It also provided for the creation of a Palestinian National Authority also referred to as the PA which was designated to have exclusive control over both security and civilian issues in Palestinian urban areas (Area A) as well as civilian control over Palestinian rural areas (Area B).

The leadership of the PLO was allowed to return to the West Bank and Gazza and negotiations to resolve the major issues such as security and the areas to be controlled by the PA were underway for five year. In May 1999, the five years interim period ended without reaching a comprehensive peace agreement, but elements of the Oslo Accords remained. The interim Palestinian Authority became permanent, and a dominant factor of the PLO. After these years of negotiations between the two parties, Israel was perceived by the PA not to be committed to resolving any of the pending issues in moving forward. Frustration over the building of settlements on Palestinian territories by the Israeli government and the visit of Ariel Sharron, the Prime Minister of Israel at that time to the Aqsa mosque sparked the second Intifada in September 2000.

Negations since the second intifada
Since the outbreak of the second Intifada, the international community has tried to bring the two parties to the negotiation table again and again but the talks kept on failing. In 2001, the Taba Summit was held in the Sinai desert aimed at enhancing the “final status” negotiations to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2002 the US, EU and Russia tried to save the peace process with a new plan called the Road Map to Peace. In November 2007, the Annapolis conference was held and aimed to revive the peace process and implement the Road Map for Peace. From 2010 to 2011, peace talks were renewed under the sponsorship of George Mitchell who represented the US government but then were stopped. More recently, John Kerry has attempted to revive the peace talks but failed. At this point, the PA is refusing to negotiate until Israel halts all settlement building on Palestinian designated land and Israel is refusing to sit down with pre-existing conditions for negotiations. The prospects of a peace treaty between the two governments are at their lowest and each government is taking unilateral decisions.

Palestinian Liberation Organization goes to the UN

After two years of failed negotiations between the two parties and the perception that Israel is not interested to resolve the pending issues, the PLO turned to the United Nations. The PLO began a diplomatic campaign to gain recognition for the State of Palestine on the borders prior to the Six Day war with East Jerusalem as its capital.

For a state to gain membership in the General Assembly, its application must have the support of two-thirds of member States with a prior recommendation for admission from the Security Council. In order to guarantee the success of the motion, the PLO began diplomatic efforts across the world. High-level delegations led by PLO senior members paid visits to many states. Palestinian ambassadors assisted by Arab Nations ambassadors were enlisting the support of governments where they are stationed to assure the success of the upcoming vote.

In 2011, at the sixty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, Palestinian president and chairman of the PLO Mahmoud Abbas submitted a motion to add Palestine as a full member of the United Nations. The initiative never went to a vote in the United Nations Security Council since only eight of the fifteen Security Council members had supported the measure.

The United States has also indicated that if the measure goes to the Security Council, that they would use their Veto power to strike it down. On the 27th of November of the same year, it was announced that an appeal had been officially made by the PLO, and would be put to a vote in the General Assembly on 29 November. The Palestinian status upgrade was expected to be supported by a majority of states and the motion was to be passed. The measure was not welcomed by the Israeli Prime Minister who declared that this resolution would make the goal of
a state of Palestine more distant since peace is only achieved through negotiations not unilateral declarations.

On Thursday November 29th 2012, the motion was re-introduced to the United Nation General Assembly and was co-sponsored by 69 countries. Following the debate of state leaders, a vote was held and in a 139-9 vote (with 41 abstaining) the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution 67/19 upgrading Palestine to non-member observer state status in the United Nations. The motion was seen as largely symbolic though it could allow Palestine to start proceeding at the International Criminal Court against Israel. As of 30 October 2014, 135 of the 193 member states of the United Nations have recognized the State of Palestine and the efforts of the PLO have not stopped to increase the number of States. In response to the Palestinian move at the UN, Israel authorized the construction of 3,000 more housing units in a Palestinian area of East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Palestinian and Israeli political positions

The central Palestinian position is that they have already compromised greatly by accepting a state covering only the areas of the West Bank and Gaza. These areas are significantly less territory than allocated to the Arab state in UN resolution 181. They feel that it is unacceptable for an agreement to impose additional restrictions which, they declare, makes a viable state impossible. In particular, they are angered by significant increases in the population of Israeli settlements and communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the interim period of the Oslo accords. Palestinians claim that they have already waited long enough, and that Israel's interests do not justify depriving their state of those rights that they consider important. The Palestinians have been unwilling to accept a territorially disjointed state.

Israel declares that its security demands that a "Palestinian entity" would not have all attributes of a state, at least initially, so that in case things go wrong, Israel would not have to face a dangerous and nearby enemy. Israel may be therefore said to agree as of now not to a complete and independent Palestinian state, but rather to a self-administering entity, with partial but not full sovereignty over its borders and its citizens.

Your Task: Developing a Response

The PLO has not achieved the main goal it set out to reach of receiving full state status by the UN as of today. Based on the information provided in this document, the history of attempts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as the political positions they both hold, what is your position regarding the matter of the PLO receiving full member status in the UN by Palestine.
Concluding Remarks

Considering the political reality leading up to PLO going to the UN a response to the UN General Assembly on the creation of a Palestinian state UN General Assembly for the Creation of a Palestinian State must be formulated. That being said, the Chair and Vice-Chair of this conference expect all delegates to participate throughout the conference, portraying their roles and representing the interests of their roles to the best of their ability. We look forward to seeing you all on May 14th.

Regards,

Ziyad Darwish

List of Actors:

1. Israel
2. PLO
3. USA
4. Canada
5. France
6. United Kingdom
7. Russia
8. Italy
9. Sweden
10. Germany
11. Spain
12. Mexico
13. Argentina
14. Uruguay
15. Venezuela
16. Tunisia
17. Egypt
18. Algeria
19. South Africa
20. Saudi Arabia
21. Turkey
22. Yemen
23. Iran
24. Pakistan
25. China
26. Malaysia
27. Philippines
28. Australia
29. Morocco
30. Greece
31. Cuba