

# All U.N. Edicts Are Not Created Equal

*Occupation Of Kuwait Differs Greatly From Israel's Occupation Of Territories*

By Dmitri N. Shalin

**T**he Persian Gulf War is history now, but the nagging question persists: Hasn't the United Nations used a double standard by authorizing force to drive Saddam Hussein from Kuwait and doing nothing to end the Israeli occupation of Arab lands?

The issue comes up again and again. Yet the question is badly posed, for it falsely equates Security Council Resolution 660 — which calls for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait — with Resolution 242, which deals with the Israeli occupation. It also disregards persistent attempts by the Arab countries to thwart the will of the United Nations.

Ever since the U.N. General Assembly authorized independent Israeli and Palestinian states in 1947, Arab leaders have vowed to drive Israel into the sea. Their repeated attacks on their Jewish neighbor violated Resolution 181, which stipulated that the United Nations considers "a threat to the peace . . . any attempt to alter by force the settlement envisaged by this resolution."

But isn't it Israel that snubs the Security Council by refusing to withdraw from occupied Arab lands?

Not quite. Resolution 242 links the Israeli withdrawal to "acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries."

Three months had barely elapsed since the Security Council passed 242 when Arab leaders assembled in Khartoum and enunciated their notorious "three nos" policy: "no peace with Israel, no negotiations with Israel, no recognition of Israel."

Only Egypt has since broken with this rejectionist stance. The rest of the Arab world has failed to deliver on its part of the bargain.

But, critics counterattack, hasn't the PLO accepted the U.N. position?

The PLO Covenant proclaims, "The partition of Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of the state of Israel are entirely illegal. The Arab Palestinian



people, expressing themselves by the armed Palestinian revolution, reject all solutions which are substitutes for the total liberation of Palestine."

Not every provision in this charter, which the PLO has steadfastly refused to revamp, is so negative. Here is Article 24: "The Palestinian people believe in the principles of justice, freedom, sovereignty, self-determination, human dignity and in the right of all peoples to exercise them."

Noble words, indeed. But how do they play in Kuwait these days? What about 20 million Kurds scattered through Arab lands and crying for justice? And is it too much to ask that these lofty principles be extended to Jews?

Israel will not exchange territory for peace, skeptics persist. It will never return to prewar borders.

Perhaps. But compare the language of 242 and 660. The latter "condemns the Iraqi invasion" and demands that Iraq "immediately and unconditionally withdraw all its forces to the positions in which they have been located on Aug. 1, 1990." The former issues no condemnation and conspicuously omits "the" or "all" when it calls on Israel to withdraw "from territories occupied in the recent conflict."

As this studied ambiguity suggests, the Security Council members understood that war was forced on Israel and that secure boundaries in the region might require territorial compromises. The Gulf War is the latest proof that the concern for security shown by Israelis is no paranoia.

Bear in mind, also, that when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made peace with Israel, he got the Sinai back. Ever since, Israelis have virtually begged Arabs to negotiate. Not one Arab leader has obliged. Never mind Resolution 338, adopted in 1973 after the Yom Kippur War, which mandated that "immediately and concurrently with the cease-fire, negotiations start between the parties concerned."

But haven't Israelis spurned the idea of a Middle East peace conference?

They did until now, and for good reason: While negotiations produce mutual agreements, conferences result in majority decisions. Being outnumbered 26 to 1, Israel is not eager to face Arab countries across the conference table.

Recently, however, Israelis have indicated their willingness to participate in a regional peace conference — provided that it serves as a conduit for bilateral negotiations rather than their substitute.

Still, my opponents conclude, U.N. Resolution 181 remains in force, and Israelis will have to honor its provision concerning the Palestinian state.

Agreed. The plight of Palestinians is intolerable. And so is the moral toll the occupation takes on Israelis. Sooner or later, Palestinians will have a state of their own. But not before Arab leaders accept all Security Council resolutions, stop equivocating about Israel's right to exist, engage it in serious negotiations and satisfy Israel's legitimate security needs.

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