

U.N. makes landmark decision on Palestine

1st December, 2012



The United Nations has voted to update the status of Palestine to a non-member observer state. The historic vote took place on Thursday in a packed session at the U.N. headquarters. More than two-thirds

of the 193 member states were needed to approve the motion for Palestine to be recognized. It was passed 138-9 with 41 abstentions. Many European countries, Russia, China, India and Brazil voted in favour of recognizing the Palestinians. The USA, Canada and Israel were among those voting against, while Germany, Britain, Australia and Colombia abstained. The vote came 65 years to the day that the U.N. adopted a resolution recommending the partition of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states. Israel dismissed the vote as "negative political theatre" and announced the building of 3,000 new homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Celebrations broke out across the West Bank as news of the vote came through. The fact that the U.N. has implicitly recognized Palestine's sovereignty was greeted as a major diplomatic victory. Veteran Palestinian peace negotiator Hannan Ashrawi told reporters what the recognition meant for Palestine: "Getting state status is what empowers the Palestinians, what defines our territory as occupied, what defines our relationships regionally and with the rest of the world," she said. Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas said he hoped the U.N. vote would "breathe new life into [peace] negotiations" with Israel. He said it was "the last chance to save the two-state solution". Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu said: "The resolution...won't change anything on the ground. It won't advance the establishment of a Palestinian state, but rather, put it further off."

Sources: CBS News / New York Times

Writing

Israel and Palestine will never agree on a two-state solution in the Middle East. It is the world's most unsolvable problem. Discuss

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

United Nations / non-member observer state / Palestine / political theatre / Jerusalem / celebrations / sovereignty / diplomatic / occupied / peace negotiations / solution

True / False

- Palestine is now a full member country of the United Nations. T / F
- Three-quarters of the U.N. voted for the resolution on Palestine. T / F
- Colombia and Germany voted neither 'yes' nor 'no'. T / F
- A U.N. resolution partitioned Palestine on the same day 65 years ago. T / F
- Palestinians in the West Bank did not party at the news. T / F
- Palestinian negotiator Hannan Ashwari said the resolution meant little. T / F
- Palestine's leader said the resolution could reignite the peace process. T / F
- Israel's leader said the resolution would not reignite the peace process. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. update | a. suddenly start |
| 2. status | b. rejected |
| 3. motion | c. forward |
| 4. abstained | d. proposal |
| 5. dismissed | e. colonized |
| 6. break out | f. upgrade |
| 7. sovereignty | g. reignite |
| 8. occupied | h. position |
| 9. breathe new life into | i. independence |
| 10. advance | j. declined to vote |

Discussion – Student A

- What springs to mind when you hear the name 'Palestine'?
- Why did countries vote against the motion?
- What do you think of the historic vote?
- How does the vote change things in the Middle East?
- What does Israel mean when it called the vote "negative political theatre"?
- Is Israel sending a message to the world by announcing the building of 3,000 new homes on the West Bank?
- What questions would you like to ask Benjamin Netanyahu?
- What do you think his answers might be?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. voted to update the | a. the motion |
| 2. a packed session | b. state solution |
| 3. approve | c. theatre |
| 4. It was passed 138-9 with | d. Palestine's sovereignty |
| 5. negative political | e. status of Palestine |
| 6. Celebrations broke | f. on the ground |
| 7. the U.N. has implicitly recognized | g. 41 abstentions |
| 8. breathe new life into | h. out across the West Bank |
| 9. the last chance to save the two- | i. at the U.N. headquarters |
| 10. The resolution won't change anything | j. peace negotiations |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you know about Israel-Palestine relations over the past 65 years?
- Do you think Palestine is now on its way to becoming a full U.N. member state?
- How long will Palestinian celebrations last?
- Do you think the vote will "breathe new life into peace negotiations"?
- What needs to happen for there to be a two-state solution?
- Is the USA a help or hindrance in negotiations?
- What questions would you like to ask Mahmoud Abbas?
- What do you think his answers might be?

Spelling

- non-member brerveso state
- The ritiosch vote took place on Thursday
- oepvpar the motion
- Australia and Colombia aseaindbt
- the iraiptotn of Palestine
- cunenoand the building of 3,000 new homes
- rtceoolisabn broke out across the West Bank
- Palestine's orvesnygiet
- Palestinian peace tnearoigt
- what defines our rrytiteor as occupied
- our relationships nllregiyoa
- the two-state luonisto

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. h	3. d	4. j	5. b
6. a	7. i	8. e	9. g	10. c

Role Play

Mahmoud Abbas - You are so happy. Tell the others three reasons why. You want urgent peace talks with Israel. If an agreement cannot be reached in the next six months, it never will. You are disappointed the USA voted against the resolution. Tell the others three reasons why.

Benjamin Netanyahu - You think the vote was a joke - negative political theatre. Tell the others 3 reasons why. Now is not the time for peace talks. Tell the others 3 reasons why. You think Abbas is living in a dream world. Tell the others 3 reasons why. Ban Ki-moon is a nice man but he doesn't understand the Middle East.

Ban Ki-moon - You want to be the guy who finally brings peace to the Middle East. You can do it. Tell the others three reasons why. You must be tough with Netanyahu. You must tell Abbas he can't have everything he wants. Tell Clinton her views are not helping the peace process.

Hillary Clinton - You told reporters the U.N. vote has put "further obstacles in the path to peace". Tell the others 3 reasons why you think so. You fully support what Netanyahu says. You think Ban Ki-moon is just on a personal mission to get the Nobel Peace Prize. Tell Abbas peace may come in the next fifty years.

Speaking – United Nations

What are the most useful parts of the U.N.? Rank these and share your rankings with your partners. Put the most useful at the top.

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| • Security Council | • General Assembly |
| • UNESCO | • World Health Organization |
| • World Bank | • World Food Programme |
| • Peacekeeping forces | • Internt'l Court of Justice |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	F	f	F	g	T	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.