

**Address by Israeli Ambassador Ron Prosor to the
General Assembly
New York, 29 November 2012**

Mr. President,

Today I stand before you tall and proud because I represent the world's one and only Jewish state. A state built in the Jewish people's ancient homeland, with its eternal capital Jerusalem as its beating heart.

We are a nation with deep roots in the past and bright hopes for the future. We are a nation that values idealism, but acts with pragmatism. Israel is a nation that never hesitates to defend itself, but will always extend its hand for peace.

Peace is a central value of Israeli society. The bible calls on us: "seek peace and pursue it."

Peace fills our art and poetry. It is taught in our schools. It has been the goal of the Israeli people and every Israeli leader since Israel was re-established 64 years ago.

Israel's Declaration of Independence states, "We extend our hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help..."

This week was the 35th anniversary of President Anwar Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem. In a speech just before that visit, President Sadat famously stood in the Egyptian parliament in Cairo and stated that he would go "to the ends of the earth" to make peace with Israel.

Israel's Prime Minister at the time, Menachem Begin, welcomed President Sadat to Israel, and paved the way for peace. This morning Prime Minister Netanyahu stood at the Menachem Begin Center and said this about the resolution that you are about to vote on:

"Israel is prepared to live in peace with a Palestinian state, but for peace to endure, Israel's security must be protected. The Palestinians must recognize the Jewish State and they must be prepared to end the conflict with Israel once and for all.

None of these vital interests, these vital interests of peace, none of them appear in the resolution that will be put forward before the General Assembly today and that is why Israel cannot accept it. The only way to achieve peace is through agreements that are reached by the parties and not through U.N. resolutions that completely ignore Israel's vital security and national interests. And because this resolution is so one-sided, it doesn't advance peace, it pushes it backwards.

As for the rights of Jewish people in this land, I have a simple message for those people gathered in the General Assembly today, no decision by the U.N. can break the 4000-year-old bond between the people of Israel and the land of Israel."

Mr. President,

The People of Israel wait for a Palestinian leader that is willing to follow in the path of President Sadat. The world waits for President Abbas to speak the truth that peace can only be achieved through negotiations by recognizing Israel as a Jewish State. It waits for him to tell them that peace must also address Israel's security needs and end the conflict once and for all.

For as long as President Abbas prefers symbolism over reality, as long as he prefers to travel to New York for UN resolutions, rather than travel to Jerusalem for genuine dialogue, any hope of peace will be out of reach.

Mr. President,

Israel has always extended its hand for peace and will always extend its hand for peace. When we faced an Arab leader who wanted peace, we made peace. That was the case with Egypt. That was the case with Jordan.

Time and again, we have sought peace with the Palestinians. Time and again, we have been met by rejection of our offers, denial of our rights, and terrorism targeting our citizens.

President Abbas described today's proceedings as "historic". But the only thing historic about his speech is how much it ignored history.

The truth is that 65 years ago today, the United Nations voted to partition the British Mandate into two states: a Jewish state, and an Arab state. Two states for two peoples.

Israel accepted this plan. The Palestinians and Arab nations around us rejected it and launched a war of annihilation to throw the "Jews into the sea".

The truth is that from 1948 until 1967, the West Bank was ruled by Jordan, and Gaza was ruled by Egypt. The Arab states did not lift a finger to create a Palestinian state. Instead they sought Israel's destruction, and were coined by newly formed Palestinian terrorist organizations.

The truth is that at Camp David in 2000, and again at Annapolis in 2008, Israeli leaders made far-reaching offers for peace. Those offers were met by rejection, evasion, and even terrorism.

The truth is that to advance peace, in 2005 Israel dismantled entire communities and uprooted thousands of people from their homes in the Gaza Strip. And rather than use this opportunity to build a peaceful future, the Palestinians turned Gaza into an Iranian terror base, from which thousands of rockets were fired into Israeli cities. As we were reminded just last week, the area has been turned into a launching pad for rockets into Israeli cities, a haven for global terrorists, and an ammunition dump for Iranian weapons.

Time after time, the Palestinian leadership refused to accept responsibility. They refused to make the tough decisions for peace.

Israel remains committed to peace, but we will not establish another Iranian terror base in the heart of our country.

We need a peace that will ensure a secure future for Israel.

Three months ago, Israel's Prime Minister stood in this very hall and extended his hand in peace to President Abbas. He reiterated that his goal was to create a solution of two-states for two-peoples—where a demilitarized Palestinian state will recognize Israel as a Jewish State.

That's right. Two states for two peoples.

In fact, President Abbas, I did not hear you use the phrase "two states for two peoples" this afternoon. In fact, I have never heard you say the phrase "two states for two peoples". Because the Palestinian leadership has never recognized that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people.

They have never been willing to accept what this very body recognized 65 years ago. Israel is the Jewish state.

In fact, today you asked the world to recognize a Palestinian state, but you still refuse to recognize the Jewish state.

Not only do you not recognize the Jewish state, you are also trying to erase Jewish history. This year, you even tried to erase the connection between the Jewish people and Jerusalem. You said that Jews were trying to alter the historic character of Jerusalem. You said that we are trying to "Judaize Jerusalem".

President Abbas, the truth is that Jerusalem had a Jewish character long before most cities in the world had any character! Three thousand years ago King David ruled from Jerusalem and Jews have lived in Jerusalem ever since.

President Abbas, instead of revising history, it is time that you started making history by making peace with Israel.

Mr. President,

This resolution will not advance peace.

This resolution will not change the situation on the ground. It will not change the fact that the Palestinian Authority has no control over Gaza. That is forty percent of the population he claims to represent!

President Abbas, you can't even visit nearly half the territory of the state you claim to represent.

That territory is controlled by Hamas, an internationally recognized terrorist organization that rains missiles on Israel's civilians. This is the same Hamas that fired more than 1,300 rockets into the heart of Israel's major cities this month.

This resolution will not confer statehood on the Palestinian Authority, which clearly fails to meet the criteria for statehood.

This resolution will not enable the Palestinians Authority to join international treaties, organizations, or conferences as a state.

This resolution cannot serve as an acceptable terms of reference for peace negotiations with Israel. Because this resolution says nothing about Israel's security needs. It does not call on the Palestinians to recognize Israel as the Jewish State. It does not demand an end of conflict and a termination of all claims.

Let me tell you what this resolution does do.

This resolution violates a fundamental binding commitment. This is a commitment that many of the states here today were themselves witness to. It was a commitment that all outstanding issues in the peace process would only be resolved in direct negotiations.

This resolution sends a message that the international community is willing to turn a blind eye to peace agreements. For the people of Israel, it raises a simple question: why continue to make painful sacrifices for peace, in exchange for pieces of paper that the other side will not honour?

It will make a negotiated peace settlement less likely, as Palestinians continue to harden their positions and place further obstacles and preconditions to negotiations and peace.

And unfortunately, it will raise expectations that cannot be met, which has always proven to be a recipe for conflict and instability.

There is only one route to Palestinian statehood. And that route does not run through this chamber in New York. That route runs through direct negotiations between Jerusalem and Ramallah that will lead to a secure and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

There are no shortcuts. No quick fixes. No instant solutions. As President Obama said in 2010, "Peace cannot be imposed from the outside."

The real message of this resolution for the people of Israel is that the international community will turn a blind eye to violations of these agreements by the Palestinians.

Mr. President,

In submitting this resolution, the Palestinian leadership is once again making the wrong choice.

65 years ago the Palestinians could have chosen to live side-by-side with the Jewish State of Israel. 65 years ago they could have chosen to accept the solution of two states for two peoples. They rejected it then, and they are rejecting it again today.

The international community should not encourage this rejection. It should not encourage the Palestinian leadership to drive forward recklessly with both feet pressing down on the gas, no hands on the wheel, and no eyes on the road.

Instead it should encourage the Palestinians to enter into direct negotiations without preconditions in order to achieve an historic peace in which a demilitarized Palestinian state recognizes the Jewish state.

Mr. President,

Winston Churchill said, "The truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it ... ignorance may deride it ... malice may distort it ... but there it is."

The truth is that Israel wants peace, and the Palestinians are avoiding peace.

Those who are supporting the resolution today are not advancing peace. They are undermining peace.

The UN was founded to advance the cause of peace. Today the Palestinians are turning their back on peace. Don't let history record that today the UN helped them along on their march of folly.

Thank you, Mr. President.
