The UN must do better to condemn terrorism

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On Dec. 6, the United Nations failed to pass a resolution condemning Hamas’s terrorist activities. On Dec. 9, Hamas praised a terror attack that critically injured a pregnant woman Shira Ish-Ran and six other Israelis, calling it “heroic.” On Dec. 12, Shira’s baby, Amiad Yisrael, died as a result of the attack.

The UN General Assembly claims to want peace between Israelis and Palestinians, but it seems to think it can achieve it by defending terrorists. Given the choice between peace and terrorism, the General Assembly has chosen to defend terrorism.

The UN has condemned Israel — a UN member state — hundreds of times. But it has never condemned Hamas, the terrorist group that controls Gaza and terrorizes the people of Israel.

Just a month ago, Hamas fired over four hundred rockets into Israel.  It has released hundreds of burning kites and encouraged violent demonstrations.  These wanton acts of violence, which have risked the lives of untold numbers of civilians and caused millions of dollars worth of damage, clearly deserve the strongest of condemnations.

On Dec. 6, the United States sponsored a resolution that gave the UN the opportunity to express its condemnation of Hamas for its terrorist activities. The U.S. resolution blames Hamas for firing rockets into Israel — a clear and blatant act of terrorism.

But instead of welcoming the opportunity to denounce terrorism as an indispensable step toward peace, allies of Hamas maneuvered to ensure that the General Assembly maintained its perfect record of silence on Hamas terrorism and chose to side with those who use violence against civilians

Opponents of the resolution altered the rules to require a two-thirds majority — rather than a simple majority — for the resolution to pass. When it came time to vote, a majority of countries voted to condemn Hamas. But 57 countries were willing to stand in support of terrorism and that was enough for the resolution to fail.

The small piece of good news is that, even though the resolution failed to pass, it garnered a record number of votes in favor of condemning Hamas. Last June, this same resolution received 62 votes in favor in the General Assembly. This time around, our resolution received 87 votes in favor, far exceeding anyone’s expectations.  Under the leadership of [President Trump](https://thehill.com/people/donald-trump) and thanks to the tireless work of Ambassador [Nikki Haley](https://thehill.com/people/nimrata-nikki-haley) and our diplomats in New York and Washington, we came closer than ever before to taking a stand against Hamas and changing the conversation at the UN, which for years has fostered an anti-Israel bias.

That this represents progress says everything about what is wrong with the United Nations when it comes to the Middle East and peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It boggles the mind how blocking a resolution to condemn a terrorist organization is in accordance with the UN’s mandate to uphold peace and security. The fact that many countries avoided voting “no” by cynically voting to raise the threshold required to pass the resolution, by being absent from the vote, or by abstaining, only adds to the hypocrisy and moral failure. There is no avoiding or spinning the fact that, at the end of the day, the UN General Assembly voted to defend terrorism by rejecting the U.S. resolution.

Opponents of the resolution claimed it distracted from the broader conflict and the parameters of a negotiated solution. Yet how does the condemnation of a terrorist group — a group whose charter calls for the complete and total annihilation of Israel — undermine the prospects for peace? Hamas is also a party to this conflict and Israel is not their only victim.

The Palestinians of Gaza also bear the scars of living under Hamas rule.  Hamas ruled Gaza by the gun, threatening the population into submission and diverting resources to develop its militant capabilities.  Hamas refuses to give up its weapons, effectively blocking donor aid which would pour in if they disarmed. So it bears asking opponents of our resolution: is Hamas’s singular contribution to the suffering of Palestinians also not worth condemning?

We are in the final stages of developing a peace plan which we hope will clear a path to work towards ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.  This is the goal the UN claims to want. It has articulated it in UN resolution after UN resolution.  Unfortunately, rather than improving the prospects for peace, the vote on Dec. 6 has only made this already difficult task even harder.  This vote empowers terrorist groups like Hamas by demonstrating that they will not be held accountable for their barbaric acts.  It makes Israel feel isolated and insecure.

The vote undermines the Palestinian Authority as well. By opposing the resolution, the PA won a short-term political gain at the cost of sending a message to all who can hear that it supports Hamas’s terrorism and the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza. In actuality, the PA hurt the Palestinian people, hurt the reputation of the Palestinian Authority in the international arena and, once again, hurt the prospects for peace.

We can continue to play the same decades-old game and not to speak the truth, even about terrorist organizations like Hamas, or we can realize that this will never achieve peace. We can and must do better. Palestinians need it, Israelis need it and the world needs it.