



25 YEARS AFTER OSLO: THE DIPLOMATIC BATTLE

In September 1993, the leader of the Palestine Liberation's Organization, Yasser Arafat and the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin signed in Washington the *Declaration of Principles* (also known as the Oslo Accords) that established a timetable for the resolution of the conflict and planned an interim Palestinian government in Gaza, Jericho and the West Bank. The Oslo Accords – considered by several international lawyers as a legal anomaly in as much as they were not treaties concluded between states – provided that the interim period was not supposed to exceed five years (Article 1). It is still a matter of debate if the application of the Oslo Accords beyond its five-year interim period – a period characterized by the construction of a huge number of new settlements, by Palestinian terrorism and Israeli military operations – is compatible with the Palestinian people's right of self-determination. Furthermore, as noted by Vera Gowlland-Debbas, not only is the legal status of the Oslo Agreements far from clear in that, not having been

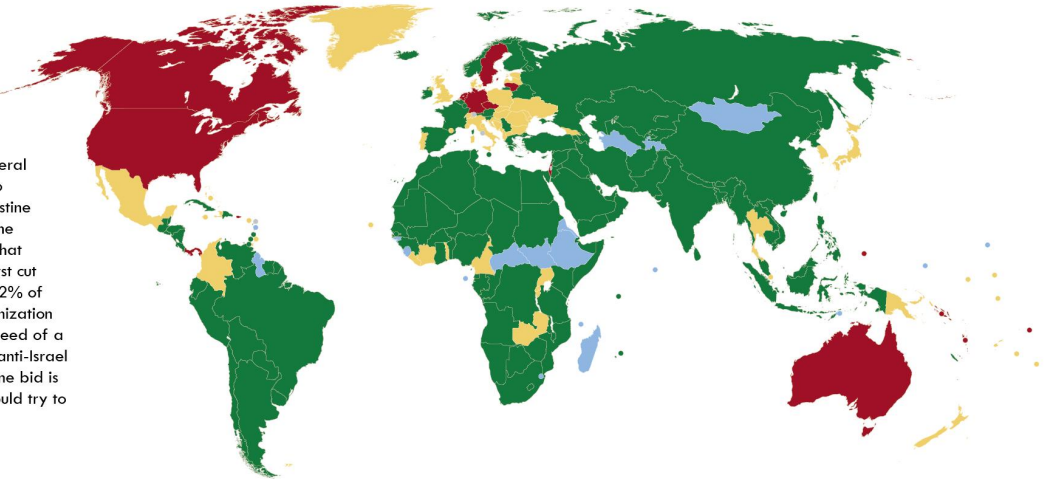
registered with the UN, they cannot be invoked before any organ of the United Nations, but also Article 103 of the UN Charter ensures that in case of conflict, the obligations of Israel under the Charter would prevail over any other agreement. 25 years after the signing of the Oslo Accords, there is almost a universal consensus among politicians and experts alike about the fact that the two-state solution is becoming increasingly difficult, particularly due to Israel's settlement policy, continuous violence (more than 10.000 victims since 2000) and the lack of sufficient international involvement and/or forms of pressure. In recent years, and with the aim of reviving the two state solution, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) decided to launch a diplomatic offensive, pushing for Palestine's recognition in multilateral frameworks. Palestine's "diplomatic intifada" may well be one of the last attempts to keep both the two-state solution and the increasingly unpopular Palestinian National Authority alive.

UNESCO MEMBERSHIP VOTE

31st October 2011



Following an active campaign to gain recognition in several specialized UN agencies -where the US has not the veto power-, UNESCO's General Conference approved, Palestine as a full member. The US and Israel but also Sweden, The Netherlands and Germany, were among the 14 states that opposed Palestine's membership. The US government first cut additional funding to the agency (it then represented 22% of that year's budget) and finally withdraw from the organization in 2017, under the Trump administration, arguing "the need of a fundamental reform in the organization and continuing anti-Israel bias at UNESCO". The importance of UNESCO's Palestine bid is that it opened a cycle in which Palestinian diplomats would try to isolate Israel in multilateral fora.

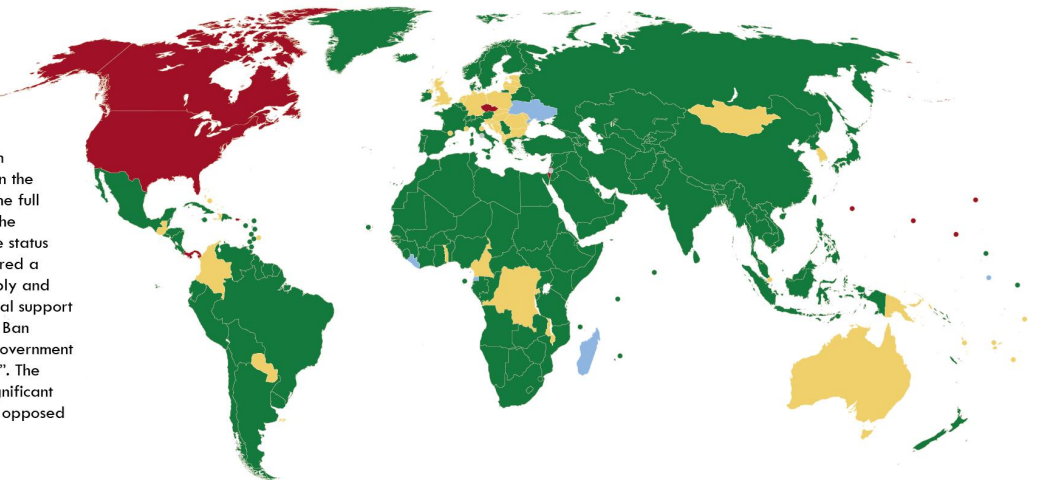


UNITED NATIONS NON-MEMBER OBSERVER STATE

October 29th 2012



On 23 September 2011, President Mahmoud Abbas on behalf of the PLO applied for Palestine's membership in the United Nations. Nonetheless, and acknowledging that the full membership could fail because of US eventual veto in the Security Council, the candidacy was downgraded to the status of non-member observer state. This formula only required a favourable simple majority vote of the General Assembly and would still be useful to visualize the growing international support to Palestine's statehood aspirations. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon was a firm supporter of the move but Israeli government qualified it as "unilateral and against the Oslo Accords". The motion was approved with small opposition, and the significant abstentions of Germany, Australia or Sweden who had opposed UNESCO's membership the year before.

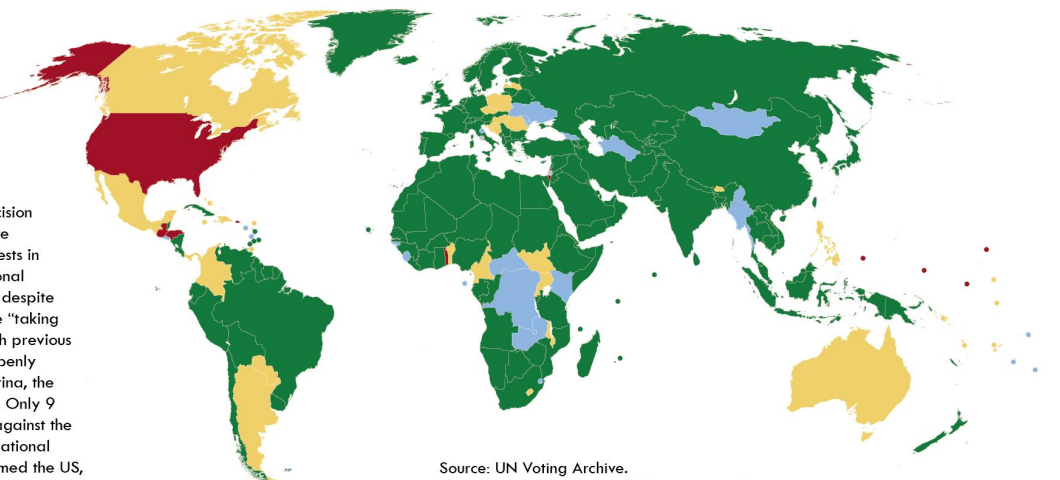


RESOLUTION ASKING NATIONS NOT TO LOCATE DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN JERUSALEM

December 21st 2017



The resolution came as a result of President Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move there the US embassy from Tel Aviv. This triggered protests in the region and was widely condemned by the international community. The UN resolution was massively supported, despite its threats by US representative's that they would be "taking names" of nations backing this resolution. In contrast with previous votes, Germany and the UK no longer abstained and openly supported the resolution. Yet, other countries like Argentina, the Philippines and Mexico went into the opposite direction. Only 9 countries, including the United States and Israel, voted against the resolution. This last episode confirmed the waning international support for Israel's policies but, at the same time, confirmed the US, and particularly Trump's, full backing for them.



Source: UN Voting Archive.

■ In Favour ■ Against ■ Abstained ■ Absent ■ Non-member/ineligible