



AmericanRhetoric.com

Meron Reuben

Speech to the United Nations Security Council on Settlement Res. S/2011/24



Delivered 18 February 2011, New York, NY

AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio and edited for continuity

Thank you, Madame President:

Direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians have been, and still remain, the only way forward to resolve the long-standing conflict in our region. Therefore, the resolution before you should never have been submitted.

Instead, the international community and the Security Council should have called upon the Palestinian leadership, in a clear and resolute voice, to immediately return to the negotiating table without preconditions and to renew direct negotiations in order to resolve all outstanding issues. This is the way to achieve peace. Indeed, this is the path through which we have reached peace agreements in the past.

Today's debate will not assist efforts to bring both sides back to the negotiating table. In fact, this process, in its adversarial nature, is likely to harm ongoing attempts to resume negotiations. It sends the wrong message to the Palestinians, signaling that they can avoid the negotiating table.

Madame President, time and time again, Israel has demonstrated its willingness to take significant steps -- indeed, painful steps -- to rebuild confidence between the two sides. However, these efforts were not met with similar steps by the other side. Furthermore, Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, including the painful dismantling of all settlements, has led to an increase in terror and violence from the areas that we left.



AmericanRhetoric.com

However, Israel continues to demonstrate its willingness to renew talks, with the express goal of resolving all outstanding issues. Prime Minister Netanyahu has called upon the Palestinian leadership to return to the negotiating table and engage in peace talks in good faith. This goal is within reach, but will require painful compromises.

The road to peace lies between Jerusalem and Ramallah, which are only 10 minutes apart.

Madame President, in the Declaration of Principles, as well as the Interim Agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, settlements are but one of the outstanding issues that both sides have explicitly agreed to address as part of final status negotiations. Any effort to predetermine a central, permanent State issue in effect prejudices what was agreed to be directly negotiated between the two sides.

Furthermore, it is not fitting or constructive to isolate this single issue from all other core matters, such as the security arrangements, refugees and incitement, as well as the need to address the relentless rocket fire on Israel by Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip.

As the Middle East continues to undergo dramatic and historic changes, one wonders whether the issue before us today is really the most relevant for discussion in this Chamber.

In concluding, Madame President, we would like to thank the United States for its long-standing and responsible leadership in this process. Its vote today reflects the understanding that the only way forward is through direct negotiations between Israel and the the Palestinians.

We reiterate our call to the Palestinian leadership to return to the negotiating table without preconditions, so that negotiations can resume without further delay.

Thank you.