

United Nations grants Palestine more powers to act as full member



United Nations, October 18 (RHC)-- The 193-member United Nations General Assembly has allowed the Palestinians to act more like a full UN member state during meetings in 2019 when they will chair the group of 77 developing nations. Palestine's permanent representative to the United Nations, Riyad Mansour hailed as "a new political victory" the General Assembly's vote in favor of his country.

Mansour told the official Voice of Palestine radio that the General Assembly vote confirms the international community's confidence in the State of Palestine and its ability to lead 134 countries and negotiate about 70 percent of the United Nations agenda issues that are of concern to humanity in general and to help developing countries develop their economy.

The United States, Israel and Australia voted against the move to give Palestine more powers, which won by 146 votes in favor. There were 15 abstentions and 29 countries didn't vote. Observers say that the U.S. and Israel used threats to coerce nations to cast their ballots against Palestine or abstain from the vote entirely.

The Palestinians want to establish a state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.

Israel captured those territories in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed East Jerusalem in a move not recognized internationally.

In 2012, the U.N. General Assembly overwhelmingly approved the de facto recognition of the sovereign state of Palestine when it upgraded the Palestinian Authority's U.N. observer status to non-member state -- like the Vatican -- from entity.

The status upgrade has allowed them to participate in some General Assembly votes and join some international bodies. However, as a non-member state the Palestinians cannot speak in meetings until after member states, diplomats said.

The Egyptian-drafted resolution allows them to procedurally operate like a member state when acting on behalf of the G-77 and China - making statements, submitting and co-sponsoring proposals and amendments, giving rights of reply and raising points of order.

"Australia's decision to vote no on this resolution reflects our long-standing position that Palestinian attempts to seek recognition as a state in international fora are deeply unhelpful to efforts toward a two-state solution," Australian U.N. Ambassador Gillian Bird told the General Assembly.

Days earlier, reports suggested that the Australian government told Israel that it might follow Washington's steps, recognize Jerusalem as the "undivided capital" of Israel and move the embassy to the contested city.

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