

# Netanyahu's show for empty seats



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## OPINION

In recent years, Netanyahu has put on shows, with props, graphics, and calculated stunts during his speeches at the United Nations General Assembly. These moves have clearly played up his media team's focus on digital diplomacy, and despite becoming a laughing stock, they have etched lasting images of his speeches into the public mind.

So, some of the images of Netanyahu that have stuck with you are from those sessions. For instance, one can recall the cartoonish sketch of a bomb with a red line at the top, or the moment he held up a Persian-language book by the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution on Palestine.

This year's UN speech by Netanyahu was no different; it was once again full of theatrics. In fact, given Israel's unprecedented political situation in global public opinion — especially in Europe — and with the surge of momentum after the recognition of Palestine as a state, one of the knock-on effects of October 7, Netanyahu had prepared even more elaborate stunts.

One such spectacle, which even caught the eye of Hebrew media, took place before the speech began. Netanyahu's office issued several statements, declaring that as part of Israel's public diplomacy, Netanyahu has instructed that loudspeakers be installed in Gaza to broadcast "the prime minister's historic UN speech". Hebrew outlets also quoted the army saying that thousands in the Gaza Strip would receive Netanyahu's address directly to their cellphones. During his talk, Netanyahu underlined that his words were broadcast in Gaza, saying, "Free the hostages! All of them. The whole 48. Free the hostages now! If you do, you will live. If you don't, Israel will hunt you down."

These recycled lines drew ridicule from Avi Ashkenazi, a military affairs analyst at Maariv. After the speech, he wrote, "The same Israel that today hacked Gazans' phones to force-feed them Netanyahu's message is the one that only two years ago failed to gather any intelligence from Gaza and couldn't even make sense of how Hamas fighters with slippers and a Kalashnikov managed to activate SIM cards." Meanwhile, Hebrew outlets, by publishing photos, made it clear that contrary to



the Israeli Prime Minister's Office claim, the loudspeakers were mounted on military cranes and trucks along the borders rather than set up for Gaza's population centers.

But the most impactful moment of Netanyahu's UN speech came when various delegations walked out, leaving row after row of empty seats. For several seconds, this left Netanyahu at a loss for words. Trying to make up for this embarrassment, the unusually large Israeli delegation in the hall and balcony made a lot of noise, applauding loudly in an attempt to paper over the cracks.

Ben Caspit, the prominent right-

wing Israeli journalist and commentator, posted a wide-shot photo of the empty seats and sarcastically quipped, "A historic speech in front of historic seats!" Meanwhile, the hardline Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth ran the headline: "International media gave little weight to Netanyahu's remarks, focusing instead on the empty seats at the General Assembly."

As in past years, Netanyahu did not let the props go. At one point, he held up images highlighting Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Iran in red, checking each off as he mentioned Israeli assassinations and military strikes in those

countries. But he seemed to have overlooked adding Qatar to his own sketch.

He then displayed two additional graphics with multiple-choice captions: "Who has murdered Americans and Europeans in cold blood?" and "Who shouts 'Death to America'?" He checked the box for "All of the above," naming Iran, Hamas, Ansarullah (the Houthis), and al-Qaeda.

In another part of his speech, Netanyahu went after Europe's stance on the two-state solution. He said, "Nearly 90% of Palestinians supported the attack on October 7th... Last year, there was a vote in the Knesset, our

parliament, whether or not to oppose the imposition of a Palestinian state. You want to guess what the results were? Out of the 120 members of our parliament, 99 voted against. And only 9 supported. That's over 90%. It's not a fringe group... Western leaders may have buckled under pressure. I guarantee you one thing, Israel won't."

The events of October 7 revived the Palestinian cause, long swept under the rug, on the global stage, and they made noticeable the grim realities of life in Gaza.

*The article first appeared in the Persian-language newspaper Iran.*



Many seats are empty at the UN General Assembly Hall in New York, the US, on September 26, 2025, because delegations walked out before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L) spoke on the fourth day of the 80th session of the General Debate.

● PETER FOLEY/UPI



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IOF speakers are loaded onto trucks to broadcast Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's United Nations General Assembly speech, in the Gaza Strip on September 26, 2025.

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# Netanyahu's humiliation, moral isolation of Israel

## OPINION

Israel, despite its military might and international backing, now finds itself caught up in a void of moral isolation. This moment stands as a historic chance for Arab states and Palestinians to join forces and alter the course of history.

The Zionist regime, which for years covered up its crimes thanks to its military strength and the endless support of the United States, always tries to hog the spotlight on the world stage. But today, because of its policies toward Palestinians and sweeping human rights violations, it has come under un-

precedented criticism. Israel's regime has not only lost ground in terms of moral credibility in international circles, but has also ended up in isolation. This situation gives Arab and Muslim countries a golden opportunity to pull together and dramatically change the course of history. Recent remarks by Netanyahu and other Israeli officials, framing war crimes as acts of self-defense, have failed to brush up Israel's image in the eyes of the world. In fact, its repeated attempts to distort reality and mislead global public opinion have only fueled Israel's growing isolation.

One telling sign of that isolation was the boycott of Netanyahu's speech at the UN. This boycott laid bare the depth of Israel's moral defeat worldwide. If used wisely, this moment could serve as a turning point in reshaping the way the global community views Israel and its policies.

### Netanyahu's racist policies, rejection of Palestinian state

A central feature of Netanyahu's policies is his outright refusal to accept even a stripped-down, non-sovereign Palestinian state. The Israeli premier has made it clear that no Palestinian entity

— even in the form of a state deprived of sovereignty — would be accepted. This outlook not only lays bare Israel's racist and colonial policies but also signals a grave threat to the future of the Palestinian people and their national identity.

In reality, Netanyahu is deeply wary of granting any legitimacy to an independent Palestinian state. He knows full well that even the existence of a limited Palestinian state on historic Palestinian soil could spell the end of the Zionist project. This makes clear that Israel is not only going after Palestinian land but is also hell-bent on erasing

Palestinian identity and rights altogether.

### Arab states: from reaction to action

As Israel blatantly carries on with its human rights abuses and war crimes, Arab and Muslim countries — alongside the wider international community — must seize global opportunities to pile pressure on Tel Aviv. Although some European leaders, like French President Emmanuel Macron, have pointed out Palestinians' rights and freedom in their speeches, such words have so far failed to translate into serious or practical

measures. Sadly, many countries still choose silence in the face of Israeli crimes and remain stuck in passive positions.

Yet such silence and inaction are in no way to the advantage of Palestinians. Muslim countries must step in with unity and coordination to confront Israel. Halting normalization with Israel remains one of the most effective tools in this regard. Should Arab states call off these normalization deals, they could bring significant economic and diplomatic pressure to bear on Israel. Normalization not only plays into the hands of the Zionist project indirectly but also