

UN embraces colonialism

Unpacking Security Council's mandate for US colonial administration of Gaza



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OPINION

More than two years into the genocide in Palestine, the UN Security Council has finally acted. But rather than acting to enforce international law, protect the victims, and hold the perpetrators accountable, it adopted a resolution that openly flouts key provisions of international law, disempowers and further punishes the victims, and rewards and empowers the perpetrators. Most disturbingly, it hands control of Gaza and the survivors of the genocide over to the United States, a co-perpetrator of the genocide, and provides for the participation of the Israeli regime in decision-making. Under the plan, Palestinians themselves are to be granted no such participation in decisions on their own rights, governance, and lives. In adopting this resolution, the Council, in effect, has become a mechanism of US oppression, an instrument for the continued unlawful occupation of Palestine, and a complicit actor in Israel's genocide. Not since the UN partitioned Palestine in 1947 against the will of the indigenous people, setting the stage for 80 years of Nakba, has the UN acted in such a baldly colonial (and legally ultra vires) way, and trampled so recklessly on the rights of a people.

A resolution from Hell
On Monday, November 17, the UN Security Council adopted a US proposal to hand control of Gaza over to a US-led colonial body called "The Board of Peace" while deploying a proxy occupation force, also US-directed, called "The International Stabilization Force". Both will answer, ultimately, to Donald Trump himself. And both will function in consultation with the Israeli regime. In what will long be remembered as a day of shame for the UN, while both Russia and China abstained — they did not use their vetoes — and not a single member of the Security Council had the courage, principle, or respect for international law to vote against what can only be seen as a US colonial outrage, a ratification of genocide, and a flagrant abdication of UN Charter principles. The resolution implicitly rejects a series of recent findings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), openly denies the Palestinian right to self-determination, and reinforces Israeli regime impunity, even as the genocide continues. Despite the ICJ's finding that the Palestinian people have a right to self-determination on their land, the resolution strips that right away, empowering hostile foreign forces to govern them. Despite the Court's finding that Gaza (as well as the West Bank and East Jerusalem) is illegally occupied and that the occupation must end quickly and completely, the resolution extends the Israeli occupation, endorses the indefinite presence of Israeli regime troops, and superimposes a second, US-led occupation on top of it. And despite the Court's finding that the Palestinians need not negotiate for their rights with their oppressors, and that no agreement or political process can trump those rights, the resolution nulli-

fies those rights and assigns them to the discretion of the US and its Israeli and other partners. Even in the midst of an ongoing genocide perpetrated by an apartheid regime, nowhere in the resolution is there a single mention of the crimes of genocide, apartheid, or colonization, of the thousands of Palestinians still held in Israeli torture and death camps, or of the principles of accountability for perpetrators or redress for victims. Nor is Israel required to meet its legal obligations of compensation and reparations, with that responsibility handed instead to international donors and international financial institutions, in what amounts to a multibillion-dollar bailout of the Israeli regime. In sum, the resolution guarantees the full impunity of the Israeli regime, in addition to advancing its normalization.

A colonial administration
The resolution even welcomes, endorses, and annexes the widely discredited Trump plan (September 29 version), and, while not citing all of its problematic provisions, it calls on all parties to implement it in its entirety. It empowers the Trump-headed Board of Peace to serve as the transitional administration governing all of Gaza, to control all services and aid, to control the movement of people in and out of Gaza, and to control the framework, funding, and reconstruction of Gaza, and it includes the dangerously broadly formulated authorization of "any other tasks that may be required". And it grants up-front authority to the Trump board to establish undefined "operational entities" and "transnational authorities," at its own discretion. The resolution even envisages a quisling body of Palestinian technocrats taking orders from and reporting to Trump's Board of Peace — on their own land. In clear breach of international law, it rejects Palestinian control of their own territory in Gaza until Trump and his collaborators decide that the Palestinian Authority has satisfied the reform requirements set by Trump himself and by the similarly odious "French-Saudi Proposal". And it contains no promise whatsoever of Palestinian independence or sovereignty. Instead, in direct contradiction to the findings of the ICJ, it sets back the cause of Palestinian freedom and self-determination with a vague, hyperqualified, and non-committal line that says that AFTER the Trump-led bodies decide that the Palestinians have met UNDEFINED "reform and development" criteria, "the conditions MAY finally be in place for a credible PATHWAY to Palestinian self-determination and statehood." And any shred of hope for progress left within those conditions is finally dashed with the coup de grace provision stating that any such process toward those ends is to be controlled by the US itself. In other words, the UN Security Council has granted a veto over Palestinian self-determination to the US, the Israeli regime's chief sponsor and co-perpetrator of the genocide. The resolution does not even offer hope that the systematic deprivation of the Palestinian people in Gaza will end. While the ICJ has declared that restrictions on aid must cease, the resolution only "underscores the importance of" humanitarian aid. It does not demand its



unfettered flow and distribution.

A proxy occupation force
The resolution also mandates an armed proxy occupation force, labeled the "International Stabilization Force," to operate under the Trump-headed Board of Peace. This force is to have a command approved by the Trump Board, and will explicitly operate in collaboration with Israel, the perpetrator of the genocide (as well as with Egypt). Its members are to be identified "in cooperation with" the Israeli regime, and it is to work with the regime to control the Palestinian survivors in Gaza. It will be mandated to secure the borders (i.e., to cage the Palestinians), to stabilize the security environment of Gaza (i.e., to suppress any resistance to occupation, apartheid, or genocide), to demilitarize Gaza (but not the Israeli regime), to destroy Gaza's military defense capacities (but not those of Israel), to decommission the weapons of the Palestinian resistance (but not those of the Israeli regime), to train the Palestinian police (in order to control the Palestinian people inside Gaza), and to work for the (nefarious) objectives of the "Comprehensive (Trump) Plan". The force is also mandated to "protect civilians" and assist humanitarian aid, to the extent that it is allowed by the US (or inclined) to do so. But that such a force, which is to collaborate with Israel, would do nothing to stand up to Israeli aggression and attacks on civilians should by now be self-evident. And it is to "monitor the cease-fire," a US-guaranteed cease-fire that has allowed continuous Israeli attacks on Gaza every day since it was declared (killing hundreds and causing massive destruction to civilian infrastructure), but which tolerates no retaliation by the Palestinian resistance. It is safe to assume that any cease-fire monitoring by such a force will be focused principally on the Palestinian side, not on the Israeli regime as the occupying power. In other words, the mission of this

proxy occupation force is to control, contain, and disarm the population victimized by the genocide, not the regime perpetrating it, and to ensure security not for the victims of the genocide but for its perpetrators. In still another stunning breach of international law, the resolution authorizes Israeli regime forces to continue to (unlawfully) occupy Gaza until the US-led Board of Peace and the Israeli regime forces collectively decide otherwise. And, in any event, the resolution provides that the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) can remain in Gaza to occupy a "security perimeter" indefinitely. Finally, both the colonial Board of Peace and its proxy occupation "stabilization force" are given a two-year mandate and the possibility of an extension in consultation with Israel (and Egypt), but not with Palestine.

Madness of colonizers
Needless to say, this resolution has been rejected by Palestinian civil society, almost all Palestinian political and resistance factions, and human rights defenders and international law experts from around the globe. As a matter of international law, the occupation of Palestine is unlawful, the Palestinian people have a right to self-determination, and they have the right to resist foreign occupation, colonial domination, and racist regimes like Israel. Not only does this resolution seek to deny these rights, but it even goes so far as to buttress the illegal Israeli presence, and to authorize its own mechanisms of foreign occupation and colonial domination. What's more, the Security Council derives all its powers from the UN Charter. That Charter, as a treaty, is a part of international law — not above it. As such, the Council is bound by the rules of international law, including and especially the highest, so-called jus cogens and erga omnes rules, like self-determination and the inadmissibility

The United Nations Security Council adopts resolution 2803 during the meeting on November 17, 2025, approving US President Donald Trump's "peace plan" for Gaza. ● LOEY FELIPE/UN

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Protesters gather near the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, the Netherlands, on January 12, 2024, as the court's proceeding against Israeli occupation is screened outside the court. ● THILO SCHMÜLGEN/REUTERS



of the acquisition of territory by force. Its blatant disregard for the findings of the ICJ on these matters reveals the degree to which many of the terms of this resolution are, in fact, unlawful and ultra vires (beyond the authority of the Council). As such, the ramifications of this rogue action by the UN Security Council will have implications far beyond Palestine. The UN Security Council, if unconstrained by international law, becomes a dangerous instrument of repression and injustice. This is precisely what we have witnessed in this case as the Council ignored international law and effectively turned the survivors of Gaza over to the co-perpetrators of the genocide. And followers of the Council will be well aware that the veto has repeatedly been used in the Council to deny Palestinian rights. In this case, when it could have been used to protect Palestinian rights, the veto was nowhere to be found. In one minute of voting, the Security Council has lost all legitimacy.

A path forward
The US attempt to impose a 19th Century form of colonialism on the long-suffering Palestinian people of Gaza, like the French-Saudi colonial scheme that came before it, is destined to failure. Such schemes are fundamentally flawed from the outset as they seek to impose outcomes without legality (under international law), without legitimacy (in their exclusion of Palestinian agency), and without any practical hope of success (given their near universal rejection both in Palestine and across the world). The US may be able to threaten and bribe enough states to support it in a UN vote, but securing sufficient troops and other personnel to implement the resolution on the ground, against the will of the indigenous people, may well be another matter. And sustaining support as the plan (inevitably) begins to unravel will be even more difficult. In the meantime, for those committed to justice, human rights, and the rule of law, the task is clear: This plan must be opposed in every capital and at every juncture. Governments must be pressed to end their complicity in Israeli abuses, in US excesses, and in this atrocious colonial scheme. The Israeli regime must be isolated. Efforts toward boycott, divestment, and sanctions must be redoubled. A military, fuel, and technology embargo must be imposed. Israeli perpetrators must face judicial prosecutions in every available tribunal. And the streets must echo with the righteous roar for Palestinian freedom of millions through demonstrations, strikes, civil disobedience, and direct action. And when this colonial house of cards falls, another, more just solution is ready to take its place. If the global majority will rise from its knees before the emperor, and assert its collective power, acting under the UNGA Uniting for Peace mechanism to circumvent the US veto, adopt accountability measures to isolate and punish the Israeli regime, and deploy real protection to Palestine, then the UN may live to fight another day. If not, it will almost certainly wither away and die, a victim of self-inflicted wounds, none deeper than the shameful resolution of November 17, 2025.

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