

BY PROVIDING A PLATFORM FOR TERRORISTS, THE U.N. RAISES THE QUESTION: DOES IT BELONG IN THE U.S.?

The United Nations General Assembly yesterday voted overwhelmingly against the United States. By doing so, the U.N. has added one more blot to its record because it has sided with a terrorist against the U.S. The issue provoking the U.N. vote is the State Department's ruling that Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) chairman Yassir Arafat does not qualify for a visa to visit the United States. The reason, says the State Department, is that the PLO has committed — and probably still does commit — acts of terrorism. Arafat has been seeking a visa to address the General Assembly, which was due to open its annual debate on "The Question of Palestine" today at U.N. Headquarters in New York.

The State Department decision clearly rests on sound legal grounds. To be sure, as host country of the U.N., the U.S. has a number of obligations, including allowing, when appropriate, delegates and other foreigners to come to Manhattan for U.N. sessions. These obligations are spelled out in detail in the 1947 U.N. Headquarters Agreement. President Harry Truman's acceptance of this agreement was governed by Public Law 80-357, which passed Congress by huge majorities in 1947. Section 6 of this law explicitly reserves to the U.S. the right to safeguard its security and to control completely the entry of aliens into any U.S. territory. U.N. Secretary-General Trygve Lie, in his September 3, 1947, report on the Headquarters Agreement, acknowledged this reservation. In it he states, "Public Law 357 refer[s] to the interpretation placed on the Agreement by Congress, in particular to the right of the United States to control the entry of aliens into the territory of the United States. In this connection it would appear desirable to draw the General Assembly's attention to Section 6 of Public Law 357."

Hundreds of Visa Denials. The U.S. always has reserved the right to determine who may enter the country and has denied hundreds of visa applications by foreign officials seeking to go to the U.N. in New York. In 1981, for instance, the U.S. was almost universally seen as fully within its legal rights in denying a visa for an Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister involved in the 1979 hostage taking at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

The decision to refuse Arafat's request for a visa is supported by top State Department officials, including Secretary of State George Shultz. More important, the decision is backed by a majority of Senators, including Vice President-elect Dan Quayle and Democrats Christopher

Dodd, Howard Metzenbaum, and Lloyd Bentsen. In a September 26, 1988, letter, they urge Shultz to turn down the PLO leader's visa application.

Acknowledging Terrorism. That the U.S. officially regards the PLO as terrorist, moreover, has been a matter of public record for some time. The Anti-Terrorism Act of 1987 explicitly states "that the PLO and its affiliates are a terrorist organization and a threat to the interests of the United States." The reasons for this statement are clear. The PLO is responsible for the murder of at least 32 Americans including diplomats and government officials, the wounding of at least 38 Americans, and the kidnapping of at least six Americans. The PLO, moreover, has claimed responsibility for some 150 terrorist attacks since February 1985. Al Fatah, the PLO faction headed by Arafat, has even boasted of its responsibility for the car bomb planted near the Jerusalem Hilton Hotel last March. Its target: Secretary of State Shultz. Arafat hardly can claim to speak for the PLO and yet disclaim responsibility for its actions to serve his immediate political and propagandistic needs.

Arafat himself has been linked directly to the 1973 murder of U.S. Ambassador Cleo Noel in Sudan. Thus Shultz and the State Department are correct and should be applauded for refusing to bow to pro-PLO international pressure to allow Arafat to enter the U.S. They legally are justified, and by doing so make an unambiguous statement against terrorism. This decision sends the strong message to the world community that the U.S. is waiting for PLO actions, not merely verbal hints, that it favors a peaceful solution to the Israel-Palestine problem and recognizes the existence of the State of Israel.

Saying a Great Deal About the U.N. PLO friends at the U.N. predictably are angry at the U.S. for its action on the Arafat visa request. In response to their demands, the U.N. apparently has begun preparing to move the General Assembly session on "The Question of Palestine" to Geneva. There, ostensibly, Arafat will be allowed to speak. Of course, the U.N. is entitled to do this. Yet, to do so would say a great deal about the U.N.: that the General Assembly readily welcomes a terrorist to its table and is willing to spend a large sum of money on it. U.N. officials estimate the cost of moving the discussion to Geneva to be about \$1 million — this at a time of the U.N.'s self-proclaimed financial crisis.

Moving the U.N. General Assembly session out of Manhattan, of course, may set a useful precedent and open a long overdue debate of whether the U.N. belongs in the U.S. at all. With its longstanding policies extending hospitality to terrorists, providing cover for Soviet spies operating against the U.S., opposing Israel, closing its eyes to the human right violations in communist countries and Third World dictatorships, and rejecting free market strategies of economic growth for developing nations, it is no wonder that the General Assembly and U.N. Secretariat feel out of place in the U.S. Legitimate U.S. concern about these problems is routinely dismissed by U.N. officials.

The U.S. should continue to uphold its values and take an even stronger stand at the U.N. regarding terrorism and espionage. The incoming Bush Administration should reaffirm the Reagan Administration's commitment to bar terrorists from entering the country. Congress should clarify the ambiguities of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1987 so that the PLO Observer Mission at the U.N. in Manhattan can be closed and all PLO members expelled. If the U.N. feels as strongly as it claims about providing a forum for terrorists, then it should seriously consider whether or not it wants to continue operating in the U.S.

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