

the backing of the great powers. Both disputes are brought regularly before the Security Council, either in the form of complaints that actions by one or other of the parties represent a renewed threat to peace, or because the Council must give approval to the continued operations of the three UN Forces. The General Assembly debates the situation in the Middle East annually and adopts resolutions by large majorities that are critical of Israel's policies and practices and uphold the rights of the Palestinians. These have little effect, except in the case of the 1.6 million Palestine refugees, who are largely dependent on UN relief programs for their maintenance and education. However, the PLO is recognized by the Assembly as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and has been granted the right of observer status.

In the case of the Middle East, it remains of the utmost significance that there exist two resolutions of the Security Council -- 242 and 338 -- (see Appendix A) that are accepted by both sides in the dispute as a basis for negotiation; the major difficulty in bringing about such negotiations has been disagreement about the role and status at them of the PLO.

On issues relating to Israel and the Middle East at the thirty-first session of the UN General Assembly, Canada supported ten resolutions, opposed three and abstained on five. Canada supported resolutions calling for the resumption of the United Nations conference on the Middle East with the participation of all parties concerned, reaffirming the right of displaced persons to return to homes in the occupied territories and calling upon Israel to return refugees to the camps in the Gaza Strip from which they were removed, provide adequate shelters and desist from further destruction of shelters.

Such resolutions as Canada opposed in the course of the session were irreconcilable with the Canadian viewpoint because they were seen to run contrary to the agreed basis for further Middle East talks as laid down by Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, prejudged the future status of the occupied territories, or were unfairly critical of Israel.

The Cyprus dispute, while as intractable as the Arab-Israel dispute, has attracted less attention at the UN until recently because of its internal character. States are reluctant to involve the UN in internal disputes for obvious reasons. The invasion of Cyprus by Turkey in 1974 altered the situation and the Assembly has since adopted resolutions that call for the withdrawal of foreign armed forces and the voluntary return of refugees to their homes. Intercommunal talks under UN auspices have failed to make progress, but are continuing.

To summarize, the main functions of the United Nations in regard to peace and security are: to provide a political forum for the consideration of threats to peace and to exercise what pressures it can on the parties to disputes to negotiate their differences peacefully; to authorize, control and finance peace-keeping operations where these are appropriate and agreed upon both by the Security Council and the parties in conflict; and, in the person of the Secretary-General, to exercise good offices for the purpose of bringing the parties together and making available the means of negotiation if they are prepared to meet. The United Nations also contributes to the relief of refugees and displaced persons in areas of conflict such as the Middle East, thereby helping to maintain conditions of at least minimum well-being for people who might otherwise become the participants in or the objects of further contention and conflict.