

UNHRC adopts resolution on Palestine, India abstains

04/07/2015 17:11 by admin

New Delhi: India for the first time on Friday abstained from voting on a resolution on Palestine adopted at the UN rights body that calls for accountability by parties involved in last year's conflict in Gaza.

India, however, maintained that there was no change in its long standing position on support to the Palestinian cause. The resolution on "ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem" was adopted at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) with 41 votes in favour, five abstentions and one vote against the resolution.

India abstained on voting along with Ethiopia, Kenya, Macedonia and Paraguay. The Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), Ajit Kumar, in an explanation of the vote said, "We are not a party to the Rome Statute or the International Criminal Court (ICC) for reasons that have been enumerated earlier. Taking that into account India has decided to abstain from this resolution".

In response to a question on India's vote, an External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson in New Delhi said, "There is no change in India's long standing position on support to the Palestinian cause." "The issue in this particular Resolution was the reference to the International Criminal Court (ICC). India is not a signatory to the Rome Statute establishing the ICC," the Spokesperson said in a statement.

"In the past also, whenever a Human Rights Council resolution had made a direct reference to the ICC, as had happened in the Resolutions on Syria and North Korea, our general approach had been to abstain. We have followed the same principle in our voting on today's Resolution," the statement said.

The resolution is based on the report of the Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict, headed by Mary McGowan Davis, who presented the report to the Council. The EU, as a whole, supported the resolution. The US voted against the resolution, saying it was biased against Israel.

Israel condemned the resolution. "This Council has lost its bearing. I have no interest in debating the content of the resolution; it is an anti-Israel manifesto," said the Israeli Ambassador to UNOG, Eviatar Manor, in a rare statement during the consideration of the resolution at the UNHRC. "This Council will not succeed in delegitimising Israel," Manor said.

The Israeli diplomat said that Israel went to "extraordinary lengths to minimise the impact of violence on Gaza civilian population".

"Are some of you convinced as was reaffirmed by investigations that Israel is innocent?...Those who oppose the resolution or abstain from voting will be contributing to ongoing violations and abuses against civilians," said Ibrahim Khraishi, Ambassador to the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to UNOG.

The US representative to UNHRC, Keith M Harper, called for a vote on the resolution and said, "We are troubled that this current resolution focuses exclusively on alleged Israeli violations without any expressed reference to Palestinian violations, even the ones mentioned in the report."

The 50-day Gaza war last year killed 1,462 civilians, and left 11,231 injured from the Palestinian side and six civilians from the Israeli side. The resolution on Palestine was the last resolution to be adopted before the UNHRC closed its

29th session.

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