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Israeli intellectuals express support for Palestinian statehood bid

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NCR Today

Friday, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has submitted a bid to the UN to admit Palestine as a member state, despite U.S. threats to veto the move.

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) currently has observer status at the UN which allows representatives to attend meetings, deliver speeches, but not to vote resolutions on other subject matters.

On the eve of Abbas' bid, hundreds of Israeli intellectuals rallied in Tel Aviv in support of the effort. More than eighty, a number of them winners of the prestigious Israel Prize, signed on to a manifesto expressing support for Israeli and international recognition of the Palestinian state. An excerpt from the manifesto reads:

"The Jewish People arose in the Land of Israel, there they developed their identity. The Palestinian People arose in Palestine, there they developed their identity.

Therefore, we sincerely welcome the expected declaration of independence by the Palestinian State, Israel's neighbor, and within the borders at the time of our independence which were determined at the end of the War of Independence in 1949; the borders more commonly known as the '67 borders. This is the natural right of both the Jewish and the Palestinian people- as written in Israel's Declaration of Independence -to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State.?"

The independence of both peoples strengthens one and the other, it is both a moral and basic necessity at one and, the same time, it is the foundation upon which good, neighborly relations are built."

Many Palestinians, however, have criticized Abbas' bid for statehood, arguing that it is more symbolic than substantive and does not deal with the fate of the more than seven million Palestinian refugees. Richard Falk, UN special Rapporteur on Palestinian human rights and Professor Emeritus of International Law at Princeton University outlines some of these concerns in his op-ed for *Al Jazeera* entitled "Statehood vs. facts on the ground". Here is an excerpt:

"Palestinian critics consider the statehood application diversionary and divisive, arguing that it will shrink the dispute to territorial issues, place approximately seven million Palestinian refugees and exile communities in permanent limbo, and allow Israel to treat the outcome of this UN shadow play as the end game in their long effort to transform what was to be a temporary occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank into a condition of permanent, if *de facto*, annexation."

For more background on what is going on at the UN see:

<http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/spotlight/unpalestine/2011/08/201182893234567545.html>

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