

Avi Benlolo: The Middle East's hot September

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By Avi Benlolo

President Kennedy, in his first meeting with Soviet premier Khrushchev during a period of high tension between the superpowers, remarked wryly that the countries faced a cold winter ahead. Between the 10th anniversary of 9/11, the UN-sponsored Durban III hate conference and the Palestinian Authority's planned unilateral declaration of an independent state, this coming September is looking like the start of a very hot fall.

In that month, New York City will unwillingly play host to a convergence of assemblies and events that have not only soured the advancement of civilization over the last decade, but furthered the regression in humanity's effort to promote tolerance, justice and human rights immediately following the Second World War.

The 10th anniversary of 9/11 will undoubtedly bring back many deep-seated emotions. Last month's impromptu celebration at Ground Zero over Osama bin Laden's death revealed the simmering and not-yet-absorbed animosity toward both the 9/11 mastermind and al-Qaeda, while last year's controversy over the so-called "Ground Zero Mosque" left bitterly polarizing feelings between those who believe it is inappropriate to have a mosque near Ground Zero and others who argued that building it would showcase American values of freedom and tolerance.

That same ideal of tolerance is not, however, afforded to Israel by the tyrants of the United Nations a few miles up the street from Ground Zero. The UN's 66th Session will kick off just two days after New York holds its 9/11 commemoration. In the last few years, the General Assembly has been graced by the likes of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whose support for the stoning of women earned the country a spot on the UN Commission on the Status of

Women and Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi, now a wanted man by the International Criminal Court.

Worse is yet to come. On September 22, the UN has scheduled a “high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration.” In other words, the UN will be commemorating a vile anti-Israel (and outright anti-Semitic) hatefest that Canada proudly refused to participate in.

Concluding only three days prior to 9/11, the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa provoked outrage beyond belief. The U.S. and Israel followed Canada out midway through the conference over a draft resolution that singled out Israel and accused it of racism, while ignoring the very real atrocities that led to the revolutions convulsing the Arab world today.

Durban ended on a sour note and in a 2009 follow up review conference, Canada, Israel, the U.S., New Zealand, Germany, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands, Poland and Australia refused to participate. Canada was the first to declare its non-participation in Durban III followed by a similar announcement from President Obama this month.

Of course, Durban III will probably know better than to use the same language in New York that they felt comfortable using in South Africa: “For the liberation of Quds, machine guns based on faith and Islam must be used” and “The martyr’s blood irrigates the tree of revolution in Palestine.”

The September rage in New York may continue with a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state voted on by the UN’s General Assembly (should such a resolution be introduced). In a *New York Times* column, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas argued “there is tremendous value for all Palestinians” in this recognition.

“Recognition would internationalize and change the legal status of the conflict. It would also allow the Palestinians to pursue claims against Israel at international bodies, including the International Court of Justice,” he said. In other words, a UN vote of approval would enhance and strengthen law-fare against Israel intended to bring about the demise of the Jewish state in the international community.

Such a resolution would do little to improve the lives of the Palestinians and Israelis living within range of each other’s weapons, but it would complicate Israel’s diplomacy and undermine the peace process. President Obama has thankfully pledged to veto any Security Council resolution, but Abbas clearly intends to ask the UN for what he has not been able to get at the bargaining table with Israel.

In the quiet months ahead, as most of us enjoy time off, the world's diplomats will be busy indeed. The future of the Middle East hangs in the balance. And it appears that September will be the moment of decision.

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