
How will Palestine's Rights Be at the UN?

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The votes in the United Nations (UN) for the inclusion of Palestine as a full State made it front page recently. It was learned that although the Security Council had rejected the proposal on April 18 - as a regrettable consequence of the veto issued by the United States -, this May 10 the General Assembly was overwhelmingly in favor of the insertion of that country into the UN system.

Faced with such a contradiction, many will surely wonder what the situation of Palestine will then be in the complicated institutional framework of the UN system. Did the Asian country gain anything with the General Assembly votes last week?

First, it should be remembered that although the UN Charter recognizes the General Assembly as having a central place in "the process of norm-setting and in the codification of international law," the Security Council has some superior powers. For example, the latter is the only body whose resolutions are binding. In concrete terms, for Palestine to enjoy the same rights as the rest of the international community, the Security Council must adopt a favorable resolution, something that does not happen due to the position of the United States.

However, from some points of view it can be said that Palestine made important progress in the General Assembly last week. According to information released by the UN itself, thanks to the approval of the resolution in the General Assembly, Palestine will have the right to occupy a position among the member states in alphabetical order, a point of progress with respect to its previous status. In this way, Palestinian representatives will now be able to register on the list of speakers to debate the agenda items; prior to this resolution, they could only participate in debates concerning their country and region.

As you can see, these are not merely symbolic gains. Palestine could henceforth issue statements on behalf of a group of States, as well as present proposals and amendments, also on behalf of a group. In addition, the new resolution grants members of the Palestinian State delegation the right to be elected to the plenary and main committees of the General Assembly.

The new rights recognized for Palestine will come into force at the beginning of the 79th session of the General Assembly, in mid-September this year. It should be clarified that, despite the most recent advances, Palestine continues as an observer State. This means that it will still not be able to vote in the General Assembly or present his candidacy to bodies such as the Security Council or the Economic and Social Council.

The contradictory case of Palestine demonstrates once again how, despite the General Assembly being the most representative multilateral body at global level, its majority will is frequently blocked by the Security Council, where only five countries (the United States, France, Great Britain, China and Russia) have the power to condition the destinies of humanity.

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