

Nikki Haley: 'Every Ounce of What We Do Should Be Against Hamas'

In a brief but sometimes tense speech to the United Nations Security Council on Tuesday, U.S. Permanent Representative to the U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley spoke out against "taking sides" in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Fresh off her trip to Israel and the Middle East, the ambassador told her fellow Security Council members that if they wanted to take sides, they should do so against the terrorists who threaten the security of the entire region. Specifically, she went after Hamas.

The following is the full transcript of her speech, provided by the U.S. Mission to the U.N.:

First, the United States condemns in the strongest terms the cowardly terrorist attack last week in Jerusalem. This stabbing attack left one Israeli border guard dead and wounded several others. We express our deepest sympathies to the victims and their families. The United States reiterates its commitment to stand with Israel against these forces of terror.

Hamas is one of these forces of terror that yet again showed its true colors to the world earlier this month. It is a terrorist organization so ruthless that it will not hesitate to put the lives of innocent children on the line.

A few weeks ago, U.N. officials discovered a tunnel underneath two schools run by the U.N. in Gaza. It was the exact type of tunnel that Hamas has used for years. These tunnels are what Hamas uses to smuggle in the materials they need to make rockets or to sneak into Israel to attack

civilians or kidnap them in the dead of night.

Imagine children playing in their schoolyard while Hamas moved explosives underneath their feet. Imagine children trying to learn, while a few feet below, terrorists might have been crawling toward Israel. All of this happening under a building flying the flag of the United Nations. It's an outrage.

But when we consider Hamas and the other terrorist organizations that operate in Gaza, the existence of this tunnel shouldn't be a surprise. This is the way Hamas does business. Tunnels in heavily populated civilian areas are its signature. Hamas hides military infrastructure in and around apartment buildings, hospitals and, as we saw again this month, U.N. compounds. In this way, Hamas consciously plots and plans to attack civilians, and it uses the cover of civilian buildings to launch those attacks. It is a sick and cynical strategy.

There is a terrible humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We remain a strong supporter of Gaza's recovery and reconstruction. I, myself, was at the Gaza border earlier this month where Special Coordinator Mladenov briefed me on the latest chilling developments.

What is happening to the people of Gaza is heartbreaking. And it is so preventable. Gaza is prime real estate on the Mediterranean Sea. It has enormous potential. But the potential is being squandered by the terrorists who govern it.

Make no mistake, Israel did not cause the problems in Gaza, even though it is often the usual suspect around here. Ten years ago, every Israeli soldier was withdrawn from Gaza, and for the last 10 years, there has not been a single Israeli settler in Gaza. Other outside countries and political factions are also not the cause of Gaza's

problems. We all would like to see Palestinians in Gaza receive the aid they so desperately need, and we will continue to work to find avenues to get aid safely to them.

But we should never forget the responsibility for this humanitarian crisis rests squarely with the one group that actually controls Gaza: Hamas.

Hamas has exercised control over Gaza since 2007. After 10 years of Hamas rule, life for the people of Gaza is worse than ever before. Rather than govern, Hamas chooses to devote its resources to building a terrorist arsenal. Rather than pursuing peace, Hamas chooses to provoke destructive wars. Rather than allowing help to reach the Palestinian people, Hamas chooses to divert untold amounts of aid to feed its military enterprise.

I saw how this works firsthand. I walked through one of the terrorist tunnels coming out of the Gaza Strip, which Israel discovered and since secured. The top and sides of this tunnel were lined with solid, sturdy concrete. We know how badly Palestinians in Gaza need concrete to rebuild their homes. But here, in this tunnel, we see how Hamas uses the concrete Gaza receives—not to help the people but to fortify its terrorist infrastructure.

Hamas remains a terrorist organization bent on Israel's destruction. Its goal is to defeat Israel by force. It will use all the resources it can to continue the fight.

This Security Council must stand up to condemn Hamas' terror. Hamas represents yet another regional threat that this Council far too often ignores. While U.N. agencies and member states dissect Israel's actions, few speak out against the terror that Hamas continues to plot. Some member states of this organization even maintain ties to Hamas and other terrorist groups that flourish in Gaza.

The Security Council must unite to say that enough is

enough. We need to pressure Hamas to end its tyranny over the people of Gaza. We should condemn Hamas in this council's resolutions and statements. We should name Hamas as the group responsible when rockets are fired from Gaza or when fresh tunnels are discovered. And we should designate Hamas as a terrorist organization in a resolution, with consequences for anyone who continues to support it.

That is how we can help build a more peaceful Middle East and how we can fulfill our responsibility here on this Council to actually maintain international peace and security.

And while we must do whatever we can to ease the suffering of the people in Gaza, we must also recognize that the suffering will not be fully addressed until the terrorists lose their grip on power.

So, all states have a role to play here. We must do much more to show Hamas that we will never tolerate terrorism. We must show that when Hamas uses homes and schools to hide its terrorist infrastructure, there will be consequences. Those who give Hamas the arms, money and political support to operate must cease. And if they do not, member states of this United Nations need to come together to put real pressure on supporters of Hamas to stop. Together, we can show Hamas that their terrorist tactics will only lead to more isolation. Together, we can show Hamas that their terrorist tactics will fail. So we should act now, before Hamas puts the people of Gaza at risk again by building more tunnels under their feet.

I want to conclude by saying that I spent a lot of time in Israel and also in Palestinian areas. I spoke with leaders of Israel, and I spoke with leaders of the Palestinian leadership as well. I went to UNRWA schools. I went to every border of Israel. I saw the threats. There are

threats that completely surround Israel—from every single side.

This council can go and do the thing it always does, which is pick a side. You can bash Israel. You can bash the Palestinian Authority. And we will get nowhere. But if you saw what I saw, if you see the terrorist activity that is happening in that area right now, you would understand that every ounce of what we say in this council—pitting the two sides against each other—is only strengthening the terrorists.

Every ounce of what we do should be against Hamas. They are a dangerous actor who has no care for the Palestinians, no care for the Israelis, and they are determined to destroy everything in their path. So once again, we are having this session, and once again, we will hear speeches on whether you're for Israel, against Israel, for Palestinians, against Palestinians. But I would ask you to please address the real threat that is causing so many people harm, and that's the threat of Hamas. {eo}