



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

The UN is on a new downward spiral following the lack of condemnation of Hamas's terrorism in Israel



At the start of the UN Human Rights Council session in Geneva, the US led a moment of silence to honour the victims of the Hamas attack on Israel.

At the almost simultaneous session of another significant UN body in New York - the Security Council - there was no agreement on a complete condemnation of Hamas's attack on Israel, and the victims were treated with less respect.

"It's terrorism, plain and simple", said Robert Wood, US Deputy Ambassador, entering the closed consultations of the UN Security Council, declaring that he would ask the other members of the Council clearly to condemn the attack on Israel.

However, that did not happen. The UN Security Council did not issue a statement from its meeting last Sunday, but participants confirmed that there was no unanimous condemnation of terrorism in the south of Israel.

"You could probably figure out one of them without me saying anything", said the US diplomat, leaving little doubt that he was referring to Russia, which the Russian ambassador, Vassily Nebenzya, confirmed to a significant extent after the meeting.

His message was "to stop the fighting immediately and to go to a ceasefire and to meaningful negotiations, which you have been told to do for decades".

There were no expectations from the UNSC

However, it was too cynical, even for Russia, to classify Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel - which have been ongoing since last Saturday - under the UN's decades-long routine of calling for a ceasefire and the start of negotiations.

Thus, Moscow conveyed to the UNSC its indolence towards Hamas attacks and its interest in not opposing Palestinian terrorism

against Israel because it benefits its vital interests in Ukraine.

The Security Council was definitely not the place where one could expect a diplomatic breakthrough in solving the crisis in the Middle East caused by the mass attack of Hamas on Israel.

However, the absence of a session on this issue would also mean the formal collapse of this once influential global forum as the guardian of world peace.

Brazil, as chairman of the UNSC last October, did its best to prevent this from happening. Last Saturday, the day Hamas attacks began, it scheduled an emergency meeting and, at the same time, condemned the attacks on Israel "from the Gaza Strip".

However, the positions of the most influential members of the Council rejected any expectation that a consensual condemnation of Hamas terrorism is possible. The most significant body of the UN could not fulfil the fundamental role for which it was established - to protect world peace.

A place where crises cannot be resolved

Russia's opposition to condemning Hamas attacks was accompanied by China's opposition. Its ambassador to the UN, Zhang Jun, told reporters before the session that Beijing condemns "all attacks against civilians", which clearly indicated that China would not explicitly declare itself against Hamas.

The UN Security Council has been practically blocked from fulfilling its fundamental role of protecting world peace since the start of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. One of the 5 permanent members with the right of veto carried out aggression against another sovereign country, a member of the UN, and thus brutally violated the Charter, the founding document of the UN.

Even though it received condemnation from more than two-thirds of UN members in its General Assembly and a request to withdraw immediately from Ukraine, Russia still sits in one of the 5 most significant chairs of the World Organisation and is in a position to decide on all global security hotspots.

It even has the right to block decisions, as is now the case with Hamas's terrorist attacks on Israel.

Given that the UN does not have a mechanism to punish Russia for its aggression against Ukraine by excluding it from the Security Council, this body will remain without any role in resolving international crises.

The lack of consensus on Israel is a significant issue for the Security Council but in a negative context. It confirms its dysfunctional nature in the largest crises since the Second World War: one in Ukraine and now in Israel.

Is the status of Palestine under review?

Israel will continue to suppress Hamas terrorism using its own forces, with the majority, but informal, support of the UNSC. But this failed session might also open up some other issues caused by Hamas's unprecedented terrorist attack on Israel.

One is the fate of UN peacekeeping missions in and regarding Israel, primarily UNDOF (United Nations Disengagement Observer Force), whose task is to separate Israeli and Syrian forces on the Golan Heights.

This mission was established 50 years ago with about 1,000 members from 12 countries. The UNDOF mission shares the fate of all other similar, regular UN peacekeeping missions, which no longer play a significant role but have an indefinite mandate.

The UNDOF mandate was last extended last June until the end of 2023, and reaching that decision in the Security Council lasted 2

minutes.

The issue of Palestine's status as a non-member observer state has not yet been raised in the UN, even though Hamas's terrorist attack on Israel provides grounds for that.

If the Palestinian authorities do not create a clear division from the activities of Hamas, their status in the UN could be disputed, as it is directly contrary to the UN Charter.

However, on the eve of the last emergency meeting of the UNSC, the Palestinian ambassador to the UN, Riyadh Mansour, did not hint that the Palestinian leadership from the West Bank could go as far as towards condemning the terrorism of Hamas.

Instead of condemnation, Ambassador Mansour told journalists in an emotional speech that "this is not a time to let Israel double down on its terrible choices", but that it is time to tell Israel that it should "change course".