**The US veto of Middle East Resolution: A hurrier on the Diplomatic Quartet Middle East Road Map**

By Jeroboam Shananika

When Barack Obama won election as the first African American ever to ascend to the position of President of the United States, I remember cautioning the misguided optimists then that they should not expect him to be their saviour. On Friday, 18 February 2011, the United States vetoed a UN Security Council Resolution that was to condemn all Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory since 1967, as illegal. The US Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Susan Rice defended the action of her country saying “while the US agreed that the settlements are illegitimate” she felt that “the resolution harmed chances for the stalled peace talks”. The vetoed resolution would also have called upon the Israelis and Palestinians to continue with negotiations on final status issues, within the timeframe specified by the Middle East diplomatic Quartet (United Nations, Russian Federation, United States, European Union), and would have urged the international community as well as regional players to intensify their support for the road map. What the resolution wanted to achieve was to complement the efforts of the quartet and not to complicate them. However, the US views the matter through its own mirror of interests and values, which in the future, will make it impossible to divide Jerusalem as a future shared capital of two states. It is acting like those that are likely to heighten tensions and compromise peace in the region. The UN Security Council was however united in sending a clear message to Israel that the international community cannot compromise over the loss of land. Some members of the Security Council voted in favour of the resolution, which demanded that “Israel, as the occupying power, immediately and completely ceases all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including east Jerusalem, and lifts all forms of discrimination against Palestinian refugees”. The response of Israel to the vote in the Security Council was like a misguided woodpecker that struck its beak so hard in the wood and unable to pull it out. The Israeli Ambassador to the UN, Meron Reuven, responded after the resolution was blocked that “the draft resolution should never have been submitted” in the first place. He added that “the road to peace is between Jerusalem and the Gulf of Elat, which are 10 miles apart”. He said that the US government had technically right, but what he has forgotten, is that the road map he is referring to, has more pot holes than the holes on a Swiss cheese. Interestingly, the US and Israel are high on the tree of isolates, they need to come down, unfortunately the ladder to help them climb down has fallen to the ground. The international community is trying all its best to reach out and help the ladder to enable the two to climb down from the tree of isolation.

In December 2010, when several Latin American countries announced their recognition of a State of Palestine, Israel in the words of its Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon, dismissed the tsunami wave of recognition for the State of Palestine with the usual head in the sand approach that the state of Facebook was more real than the State of Palestine. The desire of the international community is for a viable and stable State of Palestine to live side-by-side with the State of Israel in the spirit of good neighbourliness.

This state should be created on the basis of the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, not the type of Facebook virtual state as suggested by the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister. The hopes and aspirations of the people of Palestine continue to be suffocated by the Israelis with the US blindly looking the other way while preaching to the rest of the world about human rights. Recently it cheered the people inspired revolution in the Arab world and views these uprisings through its own subjective mirror image. The use of veto on an emotional issue is likely to send a message which could be used as footnote for the new emerging Middle East. The people of Palestine deserve peace not settlements, the children of Palestine deserve to dream and grow up to be responsible world citizens and not to be perpetual resistance fighters or tunnel diggers. When would the US open its eyes and realize that the phrase “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness” also belong to the people of Palestine. The people of Palestine too, hold the same truth just like everyone else in the world.

Now by blocking the UN Security Council Resolution which is the truth in the declaration of its independence do they believe in? The perpetual building of settlements by Israel does not contribute to the pursuit of their happiness. It contributes to mistrust and escalation of violence which ultimately will result in the loss of life.

Only when a viable and stable state of Palestine is created that Israeli security will be enhanced and both the Israelis and Palestinians will then start to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.