

**Deanship of Graduate Studies  
Al-Quds University**



**The Obama Administration's Intervention  
in UN Resolutions on Palestine**

**Rana Khaled Qasem Zakarneh**

**M.A. Thesis**

**Jerusalem – Palestine**

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in UN Resolutions on Palestine**

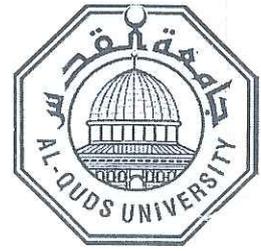
Prepared By:  
**Rana Khaled Qasem Zakarneh**

B.Sc. English Literature  
Birzeit University / Palestine

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Mohammad Abu-Koash

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## Thesis Approval

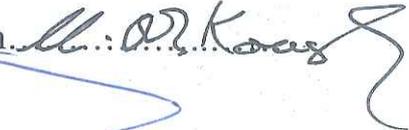
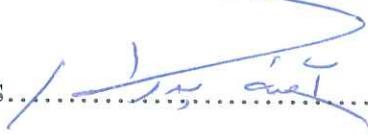
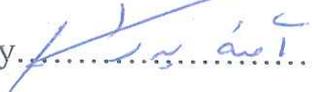
### The Obama Administration's Intervention in UN Resolutions on Palestine

Prepared By: Rana Khaled Qasem Zakarneh

Registration No: 21612848

Master thesis submitted and accepted, Date: 15/12/2018

The names and signatures of the examining committee members are as follows:

1. Head of Committee: Dr. Mohammad Abu-Koash. 
2. Internal Examiner: Dr. Daniel Terris. 
3. External Examiner: Dr. Michelle Murray. 

Jerusalem-Palestine

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## Declaration

I certify that this thesis submitted for the degree of Master, is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this study (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for higher degree to any other university or institution.

Signed .....



Rana Khaled Qasem Zakarneh

Date: 15/12/2018

*Dedicated to the Inspiring*

*Dr. Rami Zakarneh*

## **Acknowledgement**

While writing this thesis, I was lucky to receive great help along the way; thus, there are some people I would like to thank.

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## **Abstract**

The Obama administration's intervention in UN resolutions on Palestine was inevitable and it did have many implications for the process of finding a suitable solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This intervention took various forms and also went through different frequencies depending on the general political context and some other factors; such as the pressure exerted by the American pro-Israel lobbying groups. From this perspective, this thesis demonstrates how extensively the Obama administration opposed UN resolutions related to Palestine; especially during the first term (2009-2012), and also outlines the changes in Obama's UN policy toward Palestine during his second term (2013-2016). The major focus in this thesis is UN resolutions on Israeli settlements and Palestine's UN membership.

## تدخل إدارة أوباما في قرارات الأمم المتحدة المتعلقة بدولة فلسطين

إعداد:

رنا خالد قاسم زكارنه

إشراف:

د. محمد أبو كوش

### الملخص

لقد كان تدخل إدارة أوباما في قرارات الأمم المتحدة المتعلقة بدولة فلسطين أمراً حتمياً، ونجم عنه العديد من الانعكاسات على عملية إيجاد حل عملي للصراع الفلسطيني - الإسرائيلي. كما اتخذ هذا التدخل أشكالاً مختلفة وتأثر بعدة عوامل كالسياق السياسي العام وبعض العوامل الأخرى؛ مثل الضغط الذي تم تنفيذه من قبل جماعات الضغط الأمريكية الموالية لإسرائيل. من هذا المنظور، توضح هذه الرسالة مدى قوة معارضة إدارة أوباما لبعض قرارات الأمم المتحدة المتعلقة بفلسطين، ولا سيما خلال فترة الرئاسة الأولى (2009-2012)، كما توضح أيضاً التغييرات في سياسة أوباما في الأمم المتحدة تجاه فلسطين خلال فترة الرئاسة الثانية (2013-2016). ويصب التركيز في هذه الرسالة على قرارات الأمم المتحدة في مجالين رئيسيين وهما: المستوطنات الإسرائيلية وعضوية فلسطين في الأمم المتحدة.

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## **I. General Framework of the Research**

### **A. Introduction**

The US had a considerable influence over UN resolutions on Palestine during Obama's presidency (2009-2016). This influence affected the Question of Palestine and also caused a delay in Palestine's status upgrade in the UN. However, few changes occurred during Obama's second term (2012-2016) with regards to the approach adopted by his administration at the UN; turning it from a one-sided policy that mainly supports Israel (during the first term) to another one that takes into consideration the concerns of the Palestinian side. Therefore, studying the evolution of the Obama Administration's intervention in the UN is essential toward understanding how the international system represented by the UN reacted toward issues related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

For many years, the US had a major role in interfering in the work of the UN on different levels; starting from the point of the establishment of the UN, to interfering in the process of drafting and voting for resolutions on different matters. Thus, in order to fully understand the overall influence of Obama's administration on UN issues related to Palestine, there is a need to tackle the factors that shape the American UN policy, Obama's policy in particular. These factors may vary based on their source; whether it is domestic or foreign. They are also affected by the political context and the internal and/or external pressure.

Taking all these factors into consideration, this thesis aims at outlining the Obama Administration's influence on some specific UN agenda on Palestine. It focuses on specific UN documents: SC draft resolution S/2011/24, Palestine's application for UN membership, GA resolution 67/19, and SC resolution 2334. Analyzing these documents from both the political and legal aspects will be the key to understand the American attitude toward them,

in addition to studying the language used in Obama's speeches and comparing it to other famous speeches by Jewish leaders. For instance, the US has interfered in Palestine's UN status for many years, causing a delay in obtaining the non-member observer status, and blocking Palestine's attempts to gain its full UN membership. This American attitude is basically a result of different motives that occurred as a result of a specific political context. Therefore, this thesis aims at answering questions regarding Obama's intervention in UN issues related to Palestine, by first providing a brief description of the general frame work of the UN, GA and SC in particular, secondly by shedding a light on the dimensions of the Obama administration's UN policy on Palestine, including the impact of Trump's election.

## **B. Thesis Problem**

This thesis will investigate the changes in the Obama administration's attitude at the UN regarding issues related to Palestine; particularly the issue of Palestine's UN membership and Israeli settlement expansion.

## **C. Thesis Questions**

This thesis mainly aims at answering the following questions:

1. What is the core work of the UN and its two main organs; the GA and SC?
2. How does voting take place at the UN?
3. How much influence does the US have on UN resolutions regarding Palestine?
4. Did Obama try to help resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through the UN?
5. How much influence did the American pro-Israel lobbying groups have on Obama's UN policy?

6. What influence did the election of Trump have on Obama's UN policy during his second term?

#### **D. Significance of Study**

This study is important for it will provide a comprehensive review of Obama's intervention in UN resolutions on Palestine when it comes to Israeli Settlements and Palestine's UN membership. In addition, the study will look into the main differences between Obama's UN policy during his first term and during his second term; in light of the influence of some major political factors.

#### **E. Hypotheses**

1. If a SC draft resolution is lawful but against the interests of the US or its allies, an American veto will be the reaction thereto.
2. The US does influence the attitude of other states at the SC.
3. The political context affects the American attitude at the UN.
4. Obama's stated policy regarding solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is contradicted by his administration's actions on the ground.
5. Obama's policy during his second term was critical of Israel.
6. The election of Trump influenced Obama to take decisions in favor of Palestine.

## **F. Thesis Objectives**

The main goal of the thesis is to develop an approach of the American influence on the UN core duties and procedures during Obama Administration (2009-2016) when it comes to resolutions on Palestine. The other objective of the current thesis is to provide a comprehensive review of some UN resolutions concerning the question of Palestine, and the role the Obama Administration played in either blocking or passing them. The selected documents to be studied represent two important issues; Palestine's status in the UN and Israeli settlements. Moreover, this thesis aims at demonstrating the changes in the Obama Administration's attitude in terms of the political context of these resolutions, as well as the influence of the American pro-Israel lobbying groups. In particular, this thesis has the following significant sub-objectives:

1. To provide a basic overview of the UN work and the voting system in the GA and SC.
2. To review historical milestones in the US-Palestine relationship at the UN.
3. To outline the Obama Administration's influence over UN resolutions on Palestine.
4. To analyze the legal framework and the political context of some UN resolutions during the Obama Administration, as well as the language used in the texts of each document.
5. To review the different variables that led the Obama Administration to behave in a certain manner toward these UN resolutions; including the political context, specific moral standards, and the influence of the American pro-Israel lobbying groups.

## **G. Research Methodology**

The main research method for this thesis is the analytical review of some UN-related documents: specific UN resolutions on Palestine, Obama's speeches at the UN, few other speeches at the UN as well as other political events. In addition, this thesis uses previous literature on the general work of the GA and SC including the mechanism of adopting UN resolutions, as well as the history of US-Palestine relations at the UN, with a major focus on the Obama Administration's influence over UN resolutions on Palestine. This thesis was also implemented through conducting personal interviews with Palestinian and American politicians and analyzing their opinions in light of the political context and the language used in UN resolutions and speeches. The interviewees are:

### **In Palestine:**

- Dr. Nabil Shaath (Advisor to Palestine's President on Foreign Affairs and International Relations).
- Ambassador Fida Abdelhadi (Deputy Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations).

### **In the US:**

- Payton Knopf (Former Spokesman at the US Mission to the UN under then-Ambassador Susan E. Rice).
- Dr. Abdelhamid Siyam (Former UN Spokesman and Chief of UN Arabic Radio, currently Lecturer at the Center for ME Studies at Rutgers University).