Fifty years after “Zionism = Racism” – The resolution that never really died

Fifty years ago today, on November 10, 1975, the United Nations General Assembly voted to label Zionism as racism.

By Jan Kapusnak, full text published on mena-watch.com

(Summary) “The sentence was short, the damage long. It lent legitimacy to an ideological campaign that had been gaining strength since the 1960s, when Moscow discovered that condemning Zionism as racism was an easy way to woo Arab partners and many newly decolonized states,” writes Jan Kapusnak, a political scientist specializing in the Middle East.

Half a century later, despite the official retraction in 1991, this equation is heard louder than ever – in UN bodies, media, on streets and university campuses, especially since the Hamas massacre of October 7, 2023.

Cold war and ideological instrumentalization

Kapusnak describes how Resolution 3379* came about in the midst of the Cold War: after Israel’s victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, Moscow portrayed Zionism as an outpost of American imperialism and used the media, front organizations and the Non-Aligned Movement for global dissemination. On November 10, 1975, 72 states voted for the resolution, 35 against and 32 abstained.

In his speech, Israel’s UN Ambassador Chaim Herzog* referred to the anniversary of Kristallnacht and explained that Israel stands for coexistence, not racism – then he tore up the document. US Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan called the decision an “infamous act”. The German government also described it as incompatible with the UN Charter. According to Kapusnak, the repeal of 1991 was not a moral rethink, but a consequence of geopolitical changes following the end of the Cold War.

Ongoing delegitimization of Israel

Since then, according to Kapusnak, the anti-Israeli system has remained in place: Dozens of resolutions against Israel, the permanent agenda item 7 of the Human Rights Council and unilateral mandates such as that of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. The author refers to the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban, where the slogan “Zionism is racism” returned and a “script of political war” against Israel emerged – with terms such as “apartheid state”, legal campaigns and an NGO echo

chamber. Fifty years after the resolution, according to Kapusnak, its ideological legacy continues to have an impact: the Jewish state continues to be branded as a moral stain. Zionism, he writes, is the right of the Jewish people to their own homeland and a state – defaming it as racism is anti-Semitism.