

This is a transcription of an episode of The Veto Cast, a podcast of 6 episodes that explores the effects of the veto power of the UN Security Council. The Veto Cast is part of the Stop Illegitimate Vetoes campaign.



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**Episode 6: The Clash with the Charter** - released September 15<sup>th</sup> 2015

Narrator, Laila Mendy: Welcome to The Veto Cast, a podcast of six episodes that explores the effects of the veto power of the United Nations Security Council. The Veto Cast is part of the Stop Illegitimate Vetoes campaign that is committed to changing the way the Security Council veto is used.

The UN Charter is the foundation of the work of the UN and is a binding constituent treaty that all members are obligated to sign and to follow. The UN currently has 193 members, which means that most countries in the world have ratified the UN Charter. This gives the UN a lot of influence on the international political arena, but also a big responsibility. A lot of that influence, and responsibility, is focused on by the Security Council, the UN's executive branch. Incapability to act in situations where there is international pressure for intervention becomes a political failure for the UN, as an organization, and an ethical failure for the international community, when it has real, sometimes dire, consequences in the world.

When people in need of security look to the outside world for help it shouldn't be hindered by special interests in the UN.

The question of Israel and Palestine has been one of the most discussed and problematic security issues for the international community over the course of the last century. It has also been part of the UN's work, ever since the organization was founded. The General Assembly of the UN voted the original partition of the land in 1947, and the UN deployed its first peacekeeping operation to monitor the ceasefire after the war of 1948. But it's also been a cause for division between the branches of the UN.

The General Assembly has taken a quite active role, and passed many resolutions during the years that have called out wrong-doings made by the different parties in the conflict. It's even received criticism for being biased against the security of Israel. The Security Council has taken a comparatively less hard stance on the issue and hasn't passed any resolutions with any significant action since 1967. Many other resolutions have passed regarding the conflict, but not any that is considered to be significant. This highlights a discrepancy between the stances of the different UN branches on the issue as well as the influence of the Security Council's veto power.

Ryan D'Souza is the Advocacy Officer for the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

Ryan D'Souza: The inability of the international community and the UN to resolve the tragedy of the Israeli armed conflict is really a stain on our collective conscience. I mean, how many wars must we continue to see waged between Lebanon and Israel and Gaza, how many rockets, you know. We continue to rain down on civilians in both north and south Israel and how many thousands of civilians will be slaughtered by the sophisticated killing machines we see today? I mean, I think it's deplorable and borderline schizophrenic in many ways, that a country can openly state that mass atrocity prevention is a core national priority and yet then deploy their veto to shield one country from who is perpetrating atrocity crimes, because of these kind of ideas of so-called reasons on the vital national interests.

Narrator: The vetoes that have been cast regarding the conflict has mainly been from the United States. But the key issues of the vetoed resolutions have had different aspects regarding the conflict. Key issues such as Israeli settlements, and settlement building, the Israeli wall, security for Israelis and Palestinians, shared sovereignty over Jerusalem, and the situation of Palestinian refugees. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is of course complex and has a long history with many different factors to consider. Whatever opinions one may have about the current situation, the conflict can still serve as an example for how the work of the Security Council can be hindered when it's not based on the UN Charter and by actions not having the veto power's origins in mind.

Rather than swift political action against situations that the international community, and the General Assembly, deem as a threat to peace, a stalemate is created. Instead of much-needed action for people in need, instead of much-needed action for people in need, there is a status quo of inaction.

During the course of this podcast, we've highlighted different aspects of the veto power and what consequences an illegitimate use can have. We've hopefully shown the importance of a change in the current attitudes towards the use of the veto power, that's more in line with the original purpose of the veto and more in line with the UN Charter. A legitimate use of the veto power would create a more predictable UN. The international community then could trust that the veto power is only used with the Charter, and the original purpose of the veto, in mind, and that swift political action won't be stopped by special interests in the Security Council.

We go back to Ryan D'Souza.

Ryan: So I think this year is critical both for resolving the Syrian situation as well as trying to understand how to prevent mass atrocities and end their commission across different situations, such as Nigeria and South Sudan. The role of civil society should not be understated. It is critical that both major organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty, as well as smaller student groups, have a role to play in understanding and furthering our commitments that governments have made under the Responsibility to Protect in 2005. This year we'll commemorate the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica in July. This year is also the tenth anniversary of the endorsement of the Responsibility to Protect and as I have also mentioned earlier the 70th anniversary of the United Nation's founding. We should use these moments to mobilize around, to make sure that our own governments are held accountable, that they are asked "What are you doing, in keeping with your commitment to the Responsibility to Protect?" to prevent mass atrocities? What are you doing to actually ensure that there is veto restraint in the Security Council? What can we do to ensure that the Security Council meets the demands of the people in the future years?

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The Veto Cast is a co-production by the Stop Illegitimate Vetoes organization and Uppsala Studentradio 98, 9. Project Manager for The Veto Cast was Joanna Hellström, production and audio editing by Simon Sander, scripts by Alexander Fredman, interviews by Joanna Hellström and Filip Ahlborn. This production was narrated by Laila Mendy. A thanks to Daniel Kjellén and Hanna Wernerson, and the rest of the team behind the Stop Illegitimate Vetoes campaign.

Hanna Wernerson: It is our world, and the global challenges are everyone's concern. For peace and prosperity, we need an efficient UN.

Daniel Kjellén: For more information, visit our web page at [www.stopillegitimatevetoes.org](http://www.stopillegitimatevetoes.org) and our Facebook page.

Hanna: Let's stop illegitimate vetoes.