

People and place in UN resolutions on Palestine (1947-2020)

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‘Palestine is made and unmade by international law’ (Burgis-Kasthala, 2014: p691)

Abstract

In *The United Nations and the Question of Palestine: Rule by Law and the Structure of International Legal Subalternity* (Imseis 2023), international law scholar Ardi Imseis argues that the United Nations has failed to take Palestine and its people seriously. By this Imseis means that in its dealings on Palestine and Palestinians, the UN has treated both people and place as an object ‘to be ignored, casually dismissed, or represented for’ rather than as a subject with ‘a sustained history, presence and agency of its own’ (Imseis 2023: 4). In this fashion, the UN, he argues, has created for Palestine and Palestinians a state of ‘international legal subalternity’, a state in which the ‘promise of justice through international law is repeatedly proffered under a cloak of political legitimacy furnished by the international community, but its realization is interminably withheld’ (Imseis 2023: 2). This paper examines Imseis’ claims, drawing on a new corpus of resolutions passed by the General Assembly on Palestine (Lukin et al, in press), from the 1947 Resolution 181(II), which recommended the partition of Palestine, until the end of 2020 (671 resolutions; around 650, 000 words). As resolutions are a key form of action by the United Nations, and a key site for the construction of concepts of *people* and *place*, this paper draws on linguistic theory and methods, including corpus linguistics (Brezina et al 2020; McEnery and Hardie 2012), to examine the ways in which Palestine and Palestinian people have been constructed across nearly 8 decades of UN General Assembly resolutions.

References

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