

Security Council Deadlocks and Uniting for Peace: An Abridged History

Uniting for Peace has been implemented 11 or 12 times since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 377 (V) on 3 November 1950, depending on how one characterises the first case (*see case 1 below*). The Security Council has referred a majority of the cases, but has not done so since 1982 (*see cases 2-8 to the right*), while the General Assembly has done so most recently albeit not since 1997 (*see cases 9-12 to the right*).

The first request from the General Assembly interestingly came from a permanent member of the Security Council, the USSR (*see case 9*), and all General Assembly requests have dealt with situations that place one or more of the P3 (France, United Kingdom, United States) on the spot. All the Security Council requests save two (*see cases 2 and 8*), on the other hand, were in response to vetoes by the USSR.

Resolution 377 (V) (1950) aka Uniting for Peace (3 November 1950)

“If the Security Council, because of lack of unanimity of the permanent members, fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in any case where there appears to be a threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression, the General Assembly shall consider the matter immediately with a view to making appropriate recommendations to Members for collective measures, including in the case of a breach of the peace or act of aggression the use of armed force when necessary, to maintain or restore international peace and security. If not in session at the time, the General Assembly shall therefore meet in emergency special session within twenty-four hours of the request. Such emergency special session may be called if requested by the Security Council on the vote of any seven members [*nine since 1965*], or by a majority of the Members of the United Nations.”

Uniting for Peace invoked by the Security Council

Situation	Security Council Stalemate	Security Council Request	General Assembly Outcome
Case 2 Middle East (1956)	S/3710, S/3713/Rev.1 [FR and UK vetoed]	Resolution 119 (1956) [FR and UK voted against]	First Emergency Special Session on “The Situation in the Middle East” (Suez Canal) adopted seven resolutions, including Resolution 1000 (ES-I) mandating the UN Emergency Force (UNEF).
Case 3 Hungary (1956)	S/3730/Rev.1 [USSR vetoed]	Resolution 120 (1956) [USSR voted against]	Second Emergency Special Session on “The Situation in Hungary” adopted five resolutions, including Resolution 1004 (ES-II) mandating a commission of inquiry into foreign intervention in Hungary.
Case 4 Middle East (1958)	S/4050/Rev.1, S/4055/Rev.1 [USSR vetoed]	Resolution 129 (1958)	Third Emergency Special Session on “The Situation in the Middle East” adopted Resolution 1237 (ES-III) calling for early withdrawal of foreign troops from Jordan and Lebanon.
Case 5 Congo (1960)	S/4523 [USSR vetoed]	Resolution 157 (1960) [USSR voted against, France abstained]	Fourth Emergency Special Session on “The Situation in the Congo” adopted Resolution 1474 (ES-IV) confirming the mandate of the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC).
Case 6 Bangladesh (1971)	S/10416, S/10423 [USSR vetoed]	Resolution 303 (1971) [FR, UK and USSR abstained]	As the Twenty-Sixth Regular Session was in session no Emergency Special Session was necessary and the issue was dealt with under the agenda item “UN Assistance to East Pakistan Refugees”.
Case 7 Afghanistan (1980)	S/13729 [USSR vetoed]	Resolution 462 (1980) [USSR voted against]	Sixth Emergency Special Session on “The Situation in Afghanistan” adopted Resolution ES-6/2 calling for the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan.
Case 8 Middle East (1982)	S/14832 [US vetoed]	Resolution 500 (1982) [UK and US abstained]	Ninth Emergency Special Session on “The Situation in the Middle East” adopted Resolution ES-9/1 declaring Israel a non peace-loving state and calling on members to apply a number of measures on Israel.

Uniting for Peace invoked by the General Assembly

Case 1
Korea (1951)

Following three vetoes by the USSR on the situation in Korea [S/1653 (6 September 1950), S/1752 (12 September 1950), S/1894 (30 November 1950)], six Security Council members requested the General Assembly to consider the situation [A/1618 (4 December 1950)]. Although the Security Council removed the item from its agenda— a procedural issue not subject to the veto— enabling the General Assembly to freely discuss the matter under Article 11 of the United Nations Charter, in resolution 498 (V) [1 February 1951] the General Assembly nonetheless employed language from Uniting for Peace: “*noting that the Security Council, because of lack of unanimity of the permanent members, has failed to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security with regard to Chinese communist intervention in Korea [...].*” Moreover, this is the case most frequently associated with Uniting for Peace as resolution 377 (V) was adopted in response to the 6 and 12 September 1950 vetoes by the USSR referenced above.

Situation	Security Council Stalemate	General Assembly Request	General Assembly Outcome
Case 9 Middle East (1967)	N.A. [USSR draft resolution failed to get nine votes]	USSR (A/6717) and General Assembly vote (98-3-3)	Fifth Emergency Special Session on “The Situation in the Middle East” adopted six resolutions, including Resolutions 2253 and 2254 (ES-V) calling on Israel to rescind unilateral measures in Jerusalem.
Case 10 Palestine (1980)	S/13911 [US vetoed]	Senegal (A/ES-7/1)	Seventh Emergency Special Session on “The Question of Palestine” adopted eight resolutions (ES-7/2 through ES-7/9) calling for the unconditional and total withdrawal of Israel from territories occupied since 1967.
Case 11 Namibia (1981)	S/14459, S/14460/Rev.1, S/14461, S/14462 [FR, UK and US vetoed]	Zimbabwe (A/ES-8/1)	Eighth Emergency Special Session on “The Question of Namibia” adopted Resolution ES-8/2 condemning South Africa for occupation and calling for assistance to liberation struggle.
Case 12 Palestine (1997)	S/1997/199, S/1997/241 [US vetoed]	Qatar (A/ES/10/1)	Tenth Emergency Special Session on “The Question of Palestine”, still in session, adopted inter alia, Resolution ES-10/14 requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice.