



UN Security Council Passes Resolution Against Israeli Settlements

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On Wednesday, December 21, 2016, Egypt circulated a draft resolution calling for an end to Israeli settlements and demanding Israel to “immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.” The United Nations Security Council was due to vote on the resolution at 3 p.m. on Thursday, December 22. What was remarkable about this resolution is that the United States, which has traditionally protected Israel from any UN actions, was rumored to be ready to abstain and not veto this resolution.

However, on the morning of December 22, under massive pressure from Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi instructed the Egyptian UN mission to put off the vote.

According to western diplomats who spoke to *Haaretz*, Egypt requested the delay in order to discuss and work on the wording with foreign ministers of the Arab League, adding that the vote is likely to be delayed "indefinitely."

The pressure from Israel came in the early hours of the morning, with a tweet from Netanyahu saying, "The U.S. should veto the anti-Israel resolution at the UN Security Council on Thursday."

In addition, senior Israeli officials said that the United States would be breaking with its long-standing policy and commitment to Israel if it failed to veto the UN measure, using the postponement to exert pressure on Obama. Israeli officials also said that if the resolution were to go forward, Egypt would jeopardize its relations and security cooperation with Israel.

Leaving no avenue untapped, Israel also approached President-elect Trump. Israeli Ambassador to the US Ron Dermer asked Trump to publish a statement against the resolution. Trump subsequently posted on Facebook that the resolution “should be vetoed.” “Peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians,” he added, “will only come through direct negotiations between the parties, and not through the imposition of terms by the United Nations.” In a clearly non-neutral stance, he emphasized that, “This puts Israel in a very poor negotiating position and is extremely unfair to all Israelis.” Dermer then tweeted Israel’s appreciation of Trump’s “clear and unequivocal call” to veto the resolution.

France was expected to support the resolution. The French ambassador to Israel called the resolution balanced and in line with France's position. Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault expressed France’s great interest in the resolution, saying that “The continuation of settlements is completely weakening the situation on the ground” and “Taking away the prospect of a two-state solution.” The resolution “could affirm our disagreement with this policy,” he added.

Following Egypt's withdrawal, New Zealand, Malaysia, Venezuela and Senegal, who were originally co-sponsors of the draft resolution, requested the vote. The vote was set to take place on Friday December 23 at 3 p.m. local time in New York.

Before it was known whether the US will veto the resolution, senior Israeli officials were already attacking the US President and Secretary of State, saying "Obama and Kerry are behind this shameful move in the United Nations."

In a rare move, US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power announced Friday afternoon that the United States would not veto the resolution, but also would not vote in support of it.

On Friday afternoon, 14 UN Security Council members voted in favor of the resolution, while the US abstained. The resolution was adopted by the UN Security Council.

The last time the UN Security Council took a decision against Israeli settlements was in 1980. In February 2011, Obama vetoed a UN Security Council resolution against the settlements.

This might be Obama's parting shot, taking this opportunity to redeem his eight years of failed policies toward Palestine/Israel.

Regardless of some reservations on the text of the resolution by Palestinian rights activists, the US abstention and adoption of this resolution will have important political implications.

Below is the text of the resolution.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

The Security Council,

Reaffirming its relevant resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980), 476 (1980), 478 (1980), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), and 1850 (2008),

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and reaffirming, *inter alia*, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force,

Reaffirming the obligation of Israel, the occupying Power, to abide scrupulously by its legal obligations and responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and *recalling* the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice,

Condemning all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, including, *inter alia*, the construction and expansion of settlements, transfer of Israeli settlers, confiscation of land,

demolition of homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions,

Expressing grave concern that continuing Israeli settlement activities are dangerously imperiling the viability of the two-State solution based on the 1967 lines,

Recalling the obligation under the Quartet Roadmap, endorsed by its resolution 1515 (2003), for a freeze by Israel of all settlement activity, including “natural growth”, and the dismantlement of all settlement outposts erected since March 2001,

Recalling also the obligation under the Quartet roadmap for the Palestinian Authority Security Forces to maintain effective operations aimed at confronting all those engaged in terror and dismantling terrorist capabilities, including the confiscation of illegal weapons,

Condemning all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation, incitement and destruction,

Reiterating its vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders,

Stressing that the status quo is not sustainable and that significant steps, consistent with the transition contemplated by prior agreements, are urgently needed in order to (i) stabilize the situation and to reverse negative trends on the ground, which are steadily eroding the two-State solution and entrenching a one-State reality, and (ii) to create the conditions for successful final status negotiations and for advancing the two-State solution through those negotiations and on the ground,

1. *Reaffirms* that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace;
2. *Reiterates* its demand that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and that it fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard;
3. *Underlines* that it will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations;
4. *Stresses* that the cessation of all Israeli settlement activities is essential for salvaging the two-State solution, and calls for affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse the negative trends on the ground that are imperiling the two-State solution;

5. *Calls upon* all States, bearing in mind paragraph 1 of this resolution, to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967;
6. *Calls for* immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction, calls for accountability in this regard, and calls for compliance with obligations under international law for the strengthening of ongoing efforts to combat terrorism, including through existing security coordination, and to clearly condemn all acts of terrorism;
7. *Calls upon* both parties to act on the basis of international law, including international humanitarian law, and their previous agreements and obligations, to observe calm and restraint, and to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, with the aim, *inter alia*, of de-escalating the situation on the ground, rebuilding trust and confidence, demonstrating through policies and actions a genuine commitment to the two-State solution, and creating the conditions necessary for promoting peace;
8. *Calls upon* all parties to continue, in the interest of the promotion of peace and security, to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations on all final status issues in the Middle East peace process and within the time frame specified by the Quartet in its statement of 21 September 2010;
9. *Urges in this regard* the intensification and acceleration of international and regional diplomatic efforts and support aimed at achieving, without delay a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Roadmap and an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967; and *underscores* in this regard the importance of the ongoing efforts to advance the Arab Peace Initiative, the initiative of France for the convening of an international peace conference, the recent efforts of the Quartet, as well as the efforts of Egypt and the Russian Federation;
10. *Confirms its determination* to support the parties throughout the negotiations and in the implementation of an agreement;
11. *Reaffirms* its determination to examine practical ways and means to secure the full implementation of its relevant resolutions;
12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Council every three months on the implementation of the provisions of the present resolution;
13. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.