Israeli Official Accuses Obama, Kerry of ‘Abandoning Israel’

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<http://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-official-accuses-obama-kerry-of-abandoning-israel/>

An Israeli official launched a furious personal attack on President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry on Friday, accusing them of nothing less than the “abandonment of Israel,” for scheming behind Israel’s back to push an anti-settlements resolution through the UN Security Council.

Using language unprecedented in its anger and personal nature, even by the standards of two terms of friction-filled ties between the government of Benjamin Netanyahu and the Obama Administration, the official declared that “President Obama and Secretary Kerry are behind this shameful move against Israel at the UN.”

Referring to an Egyptian resolution that was introduced late Wednesday and withdrawn by Cairo on Thursday, the official charged that “the US administration secretly cooked up with the Palestinians an extreme anti-Israeli resolution behind Israel’s back which would be a tailwind for terror and boycotts and effectively make the Western Wall occupied Palestinian territory.” ([The draft resolution](http://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-of-draft-un-security-council-resolution-demanding-israel-cease-all-settlement-activities/) refers to East Jerusalem as “occupied Palestinian territory.)

The official noted that “President Obama could declare his willingness to veto this resolution in an instant but instead is pushing it. This is an abandonment of Israel which breaks decades of US policy of protecting Israel at the UN and undermines the prospects of working with the next administration of advancing peace.”

The extraordinarily bitter denunciation came shortly after the Security Council scheduled a vote on the same resolution for 3 p.m. local time Friday at UN headquarters in New York (10 p.m. Israel time). The vote was rescheduled following Egypt’s decision — after a conversation between President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi and President-elect Donald Trump — to withdraw the resolution hours before a vote on Thursday evening. New Zealand, Malaysia, Senegal and Venezuela stepped in to revive the resolution.

The unnamed Israeli official’s comments Friday followed a series of anonymous Israeli criticisms of the Obama administration over the resolution on Thursday.

The effort to push through the anti-settlements resolution constituted a diplomatic “hit” by Obama against Netanyahu and the settlement enterprise, a senior source in Jerusalem was quoted by Israeli television as saying on Thursday night.

Unconfirmed reports earlier Thursday claimed [the Obama administration was preparing to abstain on the vote](http://www.timesofisrael.com/us-was-planning-to-abstain-from-un-anti-settlements-vote-report/), and wouldn’t employ its veto. An Israeli official told reporters Thursday that Israel “became aware” that the Administration would not veto the resolution, and therefore reached out to Trump for help.

Secretary of State John Kerry had been scheduled to give an address, at which he was reportedly preparing to explain the diplomatic gambit, but that speech was canceled when Egypt withdrew the resolution.

“After becoming aware that the (US administration) would not veto the anti-Israel resolution, Israeli officials reached out to Trump’s transition team to ask for the president-elect’s help to avert the resolution,” an Israeli official said.

Cairo’s decision to withdraw the resolution marked the first fruits of “cooperation between Trump and Netanyahu against Obama,” Channel 2 reported.

It said Netanyahu sought the assistance of the US president-elect earlier on Thursday, as part of an intensive diplomatic outreach to thwart the resolution, which called for a complete halt to Israeli settlement activity, and potentially paved the way for sanctions pressure against Israel. Trump publicly urged the Obama administration to veto the resolution; privately, said Channel 2, the Trump team conveyed messages to Cairo to withdraw the text.

[In an address to the Saban Forum earlier this month](http://www.timesofisrael.com/kerry-in-stinging-rebuke-of-settlements-doesnt-rule-out-un-action/), during which he castigated the settlement enterprise, Kerry had left open the possibility that the US might not block a resolution if it was not deemed to be biased against Israel.

“All the signs show that this was a [diplomatic] hit by Obama against Netanyahu and the settlements,” the TV report quoted the senior Israeli official saying.

While that “hit” was temporarily halted, the tussle at the UN Security Council is not over, it added.

The Netanyahu government has been braced for the possibility of the Obama administration enabling a move against settlements. That concern will persist until the presidential handover on January 20.

Just before the delay was announced, Netanyahu called on the US to veto the resolution. In a video statement, the Israeli prime minister implored the Obama administration to “stand up in the UN and veto anti-Israel resolutions,” designating that position “one of the great pillars of the US-Israel alliance.”

“I hope the US won’t abandon this policy,” he said. “I hope it will abide by the principles set by President Obama himself in his speech in the UN in 2011: That peace will come not through UN resolutions, but only through direct negotiations between the parties. And that’s why this proposed resolution is bad. It’s bad for Israel; it’s bad for the United States and it’s bad for peace.”

Earlier in the day, Trump had weighed in, calling the resolution “extremely unfair” to Israelis.

“As the United States has long maintained, peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians will only come through direct negotiations between the parties, and not through the imposition of terms by the United Nations,” he said on Facebook.

If the resolution were passed, it would put “Israel in a very poor negotiating position and is extremely unfair to all Israelis,” he added.

The UN [draft resolution submitted by Cairo](http://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-of-draft-un-security-council-resolution-demanding-israel-cease-all-settlement-activities/) called on Israel to “immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.”

It further expressed “grave concern that continuing Israeli settlement activities are dangerously imperiling the viability of the two-state solution,” and called on all states “to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967,” which some analysts say invites boycotts of Israeli settlements goods.

The draft also condemned “all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation, incitement and destruction,” which some in the international community understand as turning the resolution into a “balanced” text.

The US vetoed a similar resolution at the United Nations in 2011.