Haley tells UN Washington takes vote on Hamas ‘very seriously’

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United States Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley has urged countries to back a US-drafted resolution condemning the Palestinian Hamas terror group, warning in a letter that the United States takes the vote “very seriously.”

The UN General Assembly is scheduled to vote Thursday on the draft resolution that would condemn Hamas for firing rockets into Israel and demand that it end the violence.

If adopted, it would mark the first time that the assembly has taken aim at Hamas, the Islamist terror organization that has ruled the Gaza Strip since 2007.

In a letter sent to UN diplomatic missions, Haley warned that there could be attempts by some countries to introduce amendments to the text and urged ambassadors to vote against any such proposed changes.

“The United States takes the outcome of this vote very seriously,” Haley wrote in the letter dated Monday and obtained by AFP.

“The resolution has been carefully-crafted to address a specific problem, and it reflects consultations with many stakeholders to ensure balance.

“That is why we are asking that you not only vote in favor of the resolution but that you also vote against any amendments or other efforts to undermine adoption of the text,” she added.

Haley, who steps down as UN ambassador in January, has steadfastly supported Israel in its confrontation with Hamas in Gaza and chastised the United Nations for criticizing both sides.

The influential UN ambassador has not shied away from pressuring countries to support the US stance at the United Nations.

Arab countries are expected to put forward amendments to the resolution and push for a ruling at the General Assembly that would specify that the measure must be adopted by a two-thirds majority, instead of a simple majority.

The US has won crucial backing for the measure from the European Union after it agreed to add a mention of relevant UN resolutions. The text does not however refer specifically to the two-state solution.

The EU, like the US, considers Hamas a terror group, but the 28-nation bloc is divided over how to support peace efforts.

The vote on Thursday follows the adoption in the assembly of about a dozen resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that condemn Israeli settlements and call for progress toward the two-state solution.

Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly are non-binding, but they carry political weight and are seen as a barometer of world opinion.

Hamas politburo chief Ismail Haniyeh has reached out to a number of Arab and foreign leaders to stymie the US-drafted resolution.

“Haniyeh contacted a number of leaders and foreign ministers in the region and beyond to abort the American efforts to pass a resolution condemning the Palestinian resistance and Hamas,” the terror group said in a statement posted to its website Sunday.

Haniyeh called Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, and officials in the Egyptian General Intelligence Services, according to the statement.

He also sent letters to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and a number of other regional and international leaders, Hamas said.

In the letters, Haniyeh defended the “right” of the Palestinian people “to resist the occupation with all possible means including armed resistance,” according to the statement.

The American efforts to pass a resolution in the UN General Assembly condemning Hamas comes weeks after a major flare-up in cross-border violence between Israel and terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip that saw hundreds of rockets fired at Israel and retaliatory airstrikes in the Strip.

The draft resolution “condemns Hamas for repeatedly firing rockets into Israel and for inciting violence, thereby putting civilians at risk” and demands that “Hamas and other militant actors including Palestinian Islamic Jihad cease all provocative actions and violent activity.”

The draft resolution also calls on all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law, “including in regards to the protection of the civilian population.”

In recent days, Ramallah-based Palestinian officials have come out against the American-sponsored draft resolution.

On Saturday, Fatah spokesman Osama Qawasma said his party “totally rejects” the draft resolution and vowed it would make efforts to defeat it.

Last month, Saeb Erekat, the secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organization’s Executive Committee, lashed out at the draft resolution, calling it an “attempt to turn facts on their head.”