**Lawmakers look to get tough on UN**

February 2, 2017

By: Sara Sirota

The Hill

<http://thehill.com/policy/international/317584-lawmakers-look-to-get-tough-on-un>

Lawmakers at a hearing Thursday called on the U.S. to get tough with the United Nations in response to a recent Security Council vote condemning Israeli settlement activity.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) called the UN a "politicized tool" at a hearing on Israel, the Palestinians and the UN before the House Foreign Affairs subcommittees dealing with the Middle East and on international organizations.

Ros-Lehtinen, the chairwoman of the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee, said she would reintroduce legislation to bring about tougher U.S. oversight of the world body.

Her bill, the United Nations Transparency, Accountability, and Reform Act, first introduced in 2015, demands greater oversight of U.S. contributions to the UN and affiliated organizations.

"We now have the opportunity to grow and strengthen our alliance with Israel and show the world that we support our friends – we don't leave them out to dry," added Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) who chairs the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations.

Some lawmakers wanted to go further, with Reps. Ron DeSantis (R-Fla.) and Lee Zeldin (R-N.Y.) calling for the U.S. to cut off UN funding.

Zeldin also said the U.S. must tackle the Boycotts, Divestments, and Sanctions (BDS) movement and move the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. President Trump has also vowed to move the embassy, currently in Tel Aviv, breaking with long-standing U.S. policy.

The hearing followed a December vote by the UN Security Council on Resolution 2334, which condemned Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank as illegal.

Then-President Obama faced a backlash for not blocking the vote. The U.S. abstained allowing the measure to pass the Security Council.

The House in January passed a resolution with broad bipartisan support rebuking the UN vote.

The hearing also comes amid reports that the Trump administration is preparing executive orders to halt funding for any UN agency providing the Palestinian Authority or the Palestine Liberation Organization full membership.

Trump sharply criticized the UN vote at the time and vowed in a tweet that "things will be different soon" at the world body.

In addition to Ros-Lehtinen, other House lawmakers are also [preparing legislation](http://thehill.com/policy/international/312673-republicans-prepare-legislation-to-defund-united-nations) that could restrict U.S. funding for the UN.

Some lawmakers at the hearing, though, urged caution from the administration.

"The United Nations Security Council has proved it is not informed for a balanced discussion on Israel," said Rep. Ted Deutch (D-Fla).

But Deutch added that "U.S. disengagement from the United Nations does nothing to help our friend Israel... If we want to see Israel thrive, we will stand up for it at the United Nations."