US fails in UN bid to condemn Gaza rocket firings on Israel

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By AFP

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Kuwait on Wednesday blocked a US-drafted UN Security Council statement that would have strongly condemned Palestinian rocket firings from the Gaza Strip on Israel that triggered the worst military flareup for years.

The United States had circulated the draft text ahead of an emergency council meeting, to be held later Wednesday at Washington's request, on the rocket and mortar attacks by Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Kuwait, a non-permanent council member that represents Arab countries, said that it was blocking the statement to allow for [consideration of a draft resolution it has put forward on the protection of Palestinian civilians.](https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/middle-east/175925-180530-kuwait-at-un-seeks-backing-for-palestinian-protection)

In an email to the US mission seen by AFP, Kuwait said: "We cannot agree to the text put forth by your delegation especially as we are considering a draft resolution that deals with the protection of civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Gaza Strip."

France and Britain, two veto-wielding council members, have complained that the draft resolution lacked details on the scope and objective of the proposed protection mission, diplomats said.

The United States meanwhile maintained that the measure was biased against Israel during two expert-level meetings held last week, according to diplomatic sources.

Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon has slammed the proposed resolution as "shameful" and said it was designed to help Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas.

Kuwait earlier this month blocked another US-proposed statement that criticized Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas' remarks about Jews as "unacceptable."

Two other draft statements expressing concern about the violence in Gaza were previously blocked by the United States, laying bare the sharp divisions on the Security Council over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Security Council statements are adopted by consensus by all 15 members.

In response to the barrage of mortar and rocket firings, Israel said it pounded some 65 militant targets in the Gaza Strip.

It was the most tense escalation since the 2014 war between Israel in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip and the Palestinian groups have been widely condemned in world capitals.

The exchange of fire on Tuesday and into the early hours of Wednesday had raised the possibility of yet another war in the beleaguered Palestinian enclave, which would be the fourth since 2008.

Israel's military has said it was not seeking an escalation, but warned Hamas, with whom it has fought three wars since 2008, to rein in its fighters. Three Israeli soldiers were wounded in the exchange of fire.

Islamic Jihad announced an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire agreement with Israel that would come into force at midnight local time, which did not come to pass.

Another ceasefire announced by Hamas in the early hours of Wednesday was not acknowledged by Israel, however since then rocket sirens have sounded in Israel's south only twice.

The council is expected to vote this week on the Kuwait-drafted proposal calling for protection of Palestinian civilians. Diplomats however expect the United States to resort to its veto power to block that measure.