Exclusive: The Real Reason Britain Voted Against Israel at the UN

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[http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/138906/exclusive-the-real-reason-britain-voted-against-israel-un](https://mail.hrvoices.org/OWA/redir.aspx?C=yXx1lSvc9UiBEjF2ZD5pHCZpXCZ-i9IIhVWq1wF6lS3v4m_DJ2kn0D_XCSFNrD4GTKy16KZafQc.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.thejc.com%2fnews%2fuk-news%2f138906%2fexclusive-the-real-reason-britain-voted-against-israel-un)

Britain voted in favour of a UN resolution based on a report that condemned [Israel’s actions in last summer’s Gaza war](https://mail.hrvoices.org/OWA/redir.aspx?C=yXx1lSvc9UiBEjF2ZD5pHCZpXCZ-i9IIhVWq1wF6lS3v4m_DJ2kn0D_XCSFNrD4GTKy16KZafQc.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.thejc.com%2fnews%2fisrael-news%2f138794%2fun-human-rights-council-backs-report-gaza-war-crimes) and accused it of war crimes – at the request of Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Israeli prime minister’s office rang David Cameron on Friday morning asking him to change his plan to support Israel’s public stance on the resolution because it represented a considerably watered-down version of an earlier one, the JC understands.

Mr Cameron’s initial reaction was that it would be “pure madness”, particularly as he had made several statements voicing support for Israel recently.

But the Israelis feared that, had the watered down resolution been overturned, the original resolution on the report by the Gaza Conflict Commission of Inquiry would have been revived.

As a result, the resolution was supported by 41 of the 47 members of the UN Human Rights Council, including Germany, France and the Netherlands. Only the US voted against it.

In the aftermath of the vote, Mr Cameron was widely accused by Israel supporters of duplicity. Speaking to the JC in April, Mr Cameron said he was now even more resolute than last summer in his understanding of how Israel’s right to defend itself can necessitate military action that others regard as unpalatable.

“As PM, putting yourself in the shoes of the Israeli people, who want peace but have to put up with these indiscriminate attacks — that reinforces to me the importance of standing by Israel and Israel’s right to defend itself…Because Israel is trying to defend against indiscriminate attacks, while trying to stop the attackers — and there’s such a difference between that and the nature of the indiscriminate attacks that Israel receives. I feel that very clearly. I’ve seen it very clearly as Prime Minister and I think it’s important to speak out about it.”

 Highly placed Whitehall sources have revealed that the Israelis regarded Friday’s UNHRC vote as being the lesser of two evils. Although accusing Israel of war crimes, it also held Hamas responsible, and marked a significant watering down of the original resolution put before the council.

One source told the JC: “We thought this was extraordinary, to put it mildly, but decided to do as Israel asked.”

The background to this bizarre episode stems from a World Health Organisation vote on May 20, when the UK voted against Israel in support of a motion accusing Israel of violating the health rights of Syrians in the Golan.

By 104 votes to 4, Israel was singled out at the WHO’s annual assembly as the only nation on earth to be condemned for violating health rights.

When the vote was reported, Number Ten “went ballistic. They had no idea the vote was happening, and this was just the FCO doing its usual thing”.

Another source told the JC: “You have to remember that these WHO diplomats are the lowest calibre we have.”The source confirmed that Number Ten was unaware of either the existence of the WHO vote or how the FCO was planning to cast its vote. The first it knew of it was when the result was reported.

In the aftermath, the prime minister’s chief of staff, Ed Llewellyn, took personal control of the UNHRC vote. According to an inside source he was “all over it, to make sure we didn’t have an even bigger, more important FCO cock up this time”.

By Friday morning the FCO was still pressing for an abstention rather than Number Ten’s wish for a vote against the resolution - supporting Israel’s public opposition to the resolution - but neither the FCO nor Number Ten was considering a Yes vote.

The JC has discovered that on Friday morning Benjamin Netanyahu’s office then began a series of phone calls to some of Israel’s key allies, including Angela Merkel, making the extraordinary request that they vote against Israel and against Israel’s public opposition to the resolution.

According to the Whitehall source, the Prime Minister thought this was “pure madness”. But given it was a direct request from Mr Netanyahu, and he was assured that other Israel allies would be voting the same way, he agreed.

Over the past three days, Mr Cameron has been widely accused of duplicity and hypocrisy. “Both the Israelis and the Brits will deny this”, the JC was told. “It sounds bonkers. But it’s true”.

Israeli officials contacted the JC with the following statement: “Israel informed the members of the UN Human Rights Council that it strongly opposes the resolution adopted on Gaza, as was widely reported in its official statements. At the same time, Israel asked members of the council to ensure that the proposed draft would not be made even worse”.