88 Senators Urge Obama to Uphold Veto on ‘One-Sided’ UN Resolutions

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On the eve of a meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Barack Obama in New York Tuesday, 88 US senators penned a letter to the commander-in-chief urging him to uphold for the duration of his term the US policy of opposing “one-sided” United Nations resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and vetoing them where necessary.

[In their missive](http://www.aipac.org/-/media/publications/policy-and-politics/aipac-analyses/issue-memos/2015/text-of-rounds-gillibrand-letter.pdf?elqTrackId=71FD281E81015C04EADDA6B8D8CFA471) commended by the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) Monday, the senators say that while they are disappointed that Israeli-Palestinian peace talks are stalled, the only way to resolve the conflict is through “direct negotiations that lead to a sustainable two-state solution,” echoing a stance held by Netanyahu himself.

The letter was initiated by Michael Rounds, a Republican from South Dakota, and New York Senator Kristen Gillibrand, a Democrat.

In it, the signatories — among them Tim Kaine, the Democratic vice presidential nominee — argued that the US must remain “an indispensable trusted mediator” between Israelis and Palestinians, and that the international community should “avoid taking action that would harm the prospects for meaningful progress.”

“Even well-intentioned initiatives at the United Nations risk locking the parties into positions that will make it more difficult to return to the negotiating table and make the compromises necessary for peace,” the senators wrote adding that the US “must continue to insist that neither we nor any other outsider substitute for the parties to the conflict.”

Quoting from a 2011 address Obama gave to the General Assembly in which he said that “peace will not come through statements and resolutions at the United Nations,” the senators reminded the US president that his “administration has consistently upheld the longstanding US policy of opposing — and if necessary vetoing — one-sided UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions.”

The letter came amid concerns and reports that Obama would consider letting the Security Council vote in a resolution deemed unfavorable to Israel, without using the US veto, at some point before he leaves office in January.

On Sunday, a former top US official [said that a looming Donald Trump presidency would make it more likely for Obama to support a resolution](http://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-win-could-lead-obama-to-back-2-state-move-at-un-ex-diplomat-predicts/) laying down the basic parameters for the creation of Palestinian state.

“I suspect that if Trump wins, the president would be more inclined to go for a Security Council resolution to try to do something that binds, creates standards for the future that the next president couldn’t undo,” Dennis Ross said at a conference on the future of Zionism and the US-Israel relationship. “If Clinton wins, I suspect he [Obama] would be more sensitive to her concerns as to whether this helps or hurt her.”

Ross, who worked on Israeli-Palestinian issues for decades, including a two-year stint as special assistant to Obama and a year as special adviser to Hillary Clinton, said that the current president “would like to do something, leave some kind of legacy.”

In April, 394 House Republicans and Democrats — more than 90 percent of the 435 representatives — [sent a letter to Obama](http://www.timesofisrael.com/most-us-lawmakers-pen-letter-to-obama-opposing-un-action-against-israel/) urging him to reject any actions by the UN that are biased against Israel. The letter was sent amid reports at the time that the Palestinian Authority would revive a draft resolution against Israel’s policies in the West Bank, similar to the one vetoed in 2011 at the Security Council by the United States.