U.S., Egypt Warn Palestinians Not to Push Security Council on Settlements Before U.S. Elections

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Both Egypt and the United States have warned the Palestinian leadership not to advance any moves at the UN Security Council until after the U.S. presidential election next month, a senior Palestinian official told Haaretz on Thursday.

Egypt currently holds a rotating seat on the Security Council and the U.S. is a permanent member.

According to the senior Palestinian official, the messages were sent both directly and indirectly to the Palestinian Authority, through Western and Arab intermediaries. The messages stressed that until the U.S. election is over, Washington will veto any resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, including a denunciation of the settlements.

Aides to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said that from the PA’s recent discussions with foreign officials, including U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, they did not get the impression that the U.S. administration intends to launch any initiatives of its own on this issue or let alone approve a Security Council resolution.

“We have no illusions and no expectations that the Americans won’t veto or otherwise torpedo any resolution submitted to the Security Council,” the senior Palestinian official said. “We also aren’t aware of any plan being cooked up or of any proposal whatsoever. All we hear is that there are ideas.”

Despite the Palestinians’ dissatisfaction with this situation, he added, they do not intend to make any moves at the Security Council until after the U.S. elections. Immediately after the elections however, the Palestinians do plan to ramp up their efforts at the Security Council, a senior Abbas aide said.

“We’re at the consultation stage now, and we’ll advance our move after the elections,” he said. “At the moment, there’s no agreement on the final wording, and it’s not clear to us what the American position will be and if, after the elections, the administration really will be willing to cooperate, or will still cast a veto.”

Meanwhile, however, things appear to be moving on the internal Palestinian front, mainly in relation to the planned convening of the Fatah party’s seventh conference in late November.

Internal politics

Haaretz has learned that in the coming days, Abbas will travel to Turkey and perhaps Qatar as part of his effort to arrange for Fatah representatives from the Gaza Strip to be allowed to come to the West Bank to attend the conference. He is also expected to urge Israel to allow both these representatives and those from Arab countries to enter the West Bank for the conference, so that it will be as representative as possible.

The main significance of the conference will lie in the very fact that it is taking place, after having been postponed several times. But it will also elect new representatives to the Fatah Revolutionary Council and the Fatah Central Committee, which is the party’s highest organ. Thus, if representatives from Gaza aren’t able to participate, it will seriously undermine Abbas’ status at a time when he faces a challenge from a bitter rival, Mohammed Dahlan.

Hamas is also preparing for internal party elections. In that vote, Ismail Haniyeh, the deputy head of Hamas’ political bureau, is widely expected to be chosen to replace the bureau’s current head, Khaled Meshal, whose term is expiring.

The internal elections in both organizations could spur renewed efforts to convene the Palestinian National Council, form a unity government and hold new elections for the PA. Senior officials from both parties have said that given the freeze in the peace process and the fact that global attention is focused more on Iraq and Syria than the Palestinians, it’s better for the Palestinians to concentrate on internal issues.