**Explanation of Vote following the Veto of a Draft UN Security Council Resolution on Jerusalem**

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U.S. Mission to the United Nations

New York City

<https://usun.state.gov/remarks/8222>

AS DELIVERED

Thank you, Mr. President.

I have been the proud Representative of the United States at the United Nations for nearly a year now. This is the first time I have exercised the American right to veto a resolution in the Security Council. The exercise of the veto is not something the United States does often. We have not done it in more than six years. We do it with no joy, but we do it with no reluctance.

The fact that this veto is being done in defense of American sovereignty and in defense of America’s role in the Middle East peace process is not a source of embarrassment for us; it should be an embarrassment to the remainder of the Security Council.

As I pointed out when we discussed this topic 10 days ago, I will once again note the features of the President’s announcement on Jerusalem that are most relevant here. The President took great care not to prejudge final status negotiations in any way, including the specific boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem. That remains a subject to be negotiated only by the parties. That position is fully in line with the previous Security Council resolutions.

The President was also careful to state that we support the status quo regarding Jerusalem’s holy sites, and we support a two-state solution if that’s what the parties agree to. Again, these positions are fully consistent with the previous Security Council resolutions.

It is highly regrettable that some are trying to distort the President’s position to serve their own agendas.

What is troublesome to some people is not that the United States has harmed the peace process – we have, in fact, done no such thing. Rather, what is troublesome to some people is that the United States had the courage and honesty to recognize a fundamental reality. Jerusalem has been the political, cultural, and spiritual homeland of the Jewish people for thousands of years. They have had no other capital city. But the United States’ recognition of the obvious – that Jerusalem is the capital and seat of the modern Israeli government – is too much for some.

First, some have threatened violence on the street, as if violence would somehow improve the prospects of peace.

Now today, buried in diplomatic jargon, some presume to tell America where to put our embassy. The United States’ has a sovereign right to determine where and whether we establish an embassy. I suspect very few Member States would welcome Security Council pronouncements about their sovereign decisions. And I think of some who should fear it.

It’s worth noting that this is not a new American position. Back in 1980, when Jimmy Carter was the American President, the Security Council voted on Resolution 478, which called upon diplomatic missions to relocate from Jerusalem. The United States did not support Resolution 478.

In his remarks, then-Secretary of State Ed Muskie said the following: “The draft resolution before us today is illustrative of a preoccupation which has produced this series of unbalanced and unrealistic texts on Middle East issues.”

Specifically, regarding the provision on diplomatic missions in Jerusalem, Secretary Muskie said this: “In our judgment, this provision is not binding. It is without force. And we reject it as a disruptive attempt to dictate to other nations. It does nothing to promote a resolution of the difficult problems facing Israel and its neighbors. It does nothing to advance the cause of peace.”

That was in 1980. It is equally true today. The United States will not be told by any country where we can put our embassy.

Buried even deeper in the jargon of this resolution is the accusation that the United States is setting back the prospects of peace in the Middle East. That is a scandalous charge. Those who are making it should consider that it only harms the very Palestinian people they claim to speak for. What does it gain the Palestinian people for their leaders to throw up roadblocks to negotiations?

A “peace process” that is damaged by the simple recognition that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel is not a peace process; it is a justification for an endless stalemate. What does it gain the Palestinian people for some of their leaders to accuse the United States of being hostile to the cause of peace? It gains them nothing, but it risks costing them a great deal.

The United States has done more than any other country to assist the Palestinian people. By far. Since 1994, we have given over $5 billion to the Palestinians in bilateral economic assistance, security assistance, and humanitarian assistance.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees operates schools and medical facilities throughout the region. It is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions. Last year, the United States voluntarily funded almost 30 percent of UNRWA’s budget. That’s more than the next two largest donors combined. And it’s vastly more than some of the members of this Council that have considerable financial resources of their own.

I’ll be blunt: When the American people see a group of countries whose total contributions to the Palestinian people is less than one percent of UNRWA’s budget – when they see these countries accuse the United States of being insufficiently committed to peace – the American people lose their patience.

I have been to the Palestinian refugee camps the United States supports with their contributions. I have met with men, women, and children. I have advocated on their behalf. I can tell you that their leaders do them no favors by being more open to abandoning peace negotiations than to doing the hard work of seeing them to completion.

The United States has never been more committed to peace in the Middle East. We were committed to it before the President announced our recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and we’re committed to it today.

What we witnessed here today in the Security Council is an insult. It won’t be forgotten. It’s one more example of the United Nations doing more harm than good in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Today, for the simple act of deciding where to put our embassy, the United States was forced to defend its sovereignty. The record will reflect that we did so proudly. Today, for acknowledging a basic truth about the capital city of Israel, we are accused of harming peace. The record will reflect that we reject that outrageous claim.

For these reasons, and with the best interests of both the Israeli and the Palestinian people firmly in mind, the United States votes no on this resolution.

Thank you.

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