Vatican Says Won't Co-Sponsor Palestinian Flag Initiative at U.N.

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http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/08/26/us-palestinians-vatican-un-idUSKCN0QV02K20150826

The Vatican on Tuesday asked the Palestinian U.N. mission to remove all references to it from a draft resolution the Palestinians have prepared for the General Assembly calling for the flags of Palestine and the Holy See to fly at the U.N.

The Palestinian draft resolution, which was seen by Reuters, says that the flags of non-member observer states "shall be raised at the [United Nations](http://www.reuters.com/subjects/united-nations) Headquarters and Offices following the flags of the member states of the United Nations."

The draft resolution specifically refers to both the Vatican and the State of Palestine, both of which are non-member observer states at the United Nations.

The initiative comes one month before the scheduled appearance of Pope Francis for a major speech before a high-level gathering of the 193-nation U.N. General Assembly on Sept. 25.

Currently, only member states' flags fly at U.N. headquarters. U.N. diplomats say the United States and Israel, which do not recognize Palestinian statehood, would likely be irked by any move to fly the Palestinian flag at U.N. headquarters in New York City.

The flag-flying resolution, which diplomats said the Palestinians were expected to circulate to the full assembly as early as on Wednesday, had apparently been prepared without the explicit consent of the Vatican's mission to the United Nations.

In a note circulated to some U.N. members and seen by Reuters, the Vatican made clear that while it did not object to the Palestinians proposing a resolution to fly their own flag, the Holy See had no plans to join the initiative - even though the Vatican formally recognized the State of Palestinian earlier this year.

"The Holy See does not intend to co-sponsor a draft resolution that the State of Palestine may eventually present on the matter," the note said.

"The Holy See asks the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations kindly to remove in its draft resolution any reference to the 'Holy See' and any generic reference 'on behalf of the Observer States'," it added.

A diplomat at the Palestinian mission did not respond immediately to a request for comment.

In 2012 the General Assembly overwhelmingly approved the de facto recognition of the sovereign state of Palestine. That de facto recognition came after a failed bid by the Palestinians to secure full membership in the United Nations.