Tillerson Criticizes U.S. Decision to Abstain From U.N. Israel Vote

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Rex Tillerson condemned the Obama administration’s decision not to veto a U.N. Security Council resolution critical of Israel’s development of settlements on the West Bank.

The former ExxonMobil chief said the resolution was “not helpful” and “undermines” the conditions for peace talks to continue. He described Secretary of State John F. Kerry’s subsequent speech criticizing Israel as “quite troubling.”

He also suggested the onus was on the Palestinians to make a “serious demonstration” of good faith toward negotiations before there could be a discussion about stopping settlement construction.

The Obama administration’s policy has been critical of Israeli settlement building on West Bank land that Palestinians expect to be part of an eventual Palestinian state. In an interview aired on an Israeli television station Wednesday, [Obama said that](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-usa-idUSKBN14U2JX) Israel’s settlement policy was making a two-state solution “impossible.”

But Tillerson’s comments appeared to move in the opposite direction.

“Until there is a serious demonstration on their part,” Tillerson said, referring to Palestinians, “it’s going to be very difficult to create conditions at the table for parties to have any productive conversation about settlements.”

Tillerson said it was important for the United States to recommit to its alliance with Israel, which he said “is, was and always has been our most important ally” in the Middle East.

Again criticizing Palestinians, Tillerson said that “there have been many many opportunities for progress to be made and those have never been seized upon.”