Palestinians push for UN resolution rapping Jerusalem decision

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Palestinian diplomats want the UN Security Council to vote on a draft resolution rejecting US President Donald Trump’s decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, even though the measure would almost certainly face a US veto, diplomats said Wednesday.

Palestinian Authority Ambassador Riyad Mansour told AFP that the text would demand that the United States scrap the decision on Jerusalem, but other diplomats suggested the wording would not be so strong.

Egypt was expected to circulate a draft resolution to council members, possibly as early as this week, according to senior council diplomats.

Mansour said late Tuesday that he was working on a draft text that would “reaffirm the positions of the Security Council and ask the Americans to rescind.”

The United States found itself isolated at the Security Council last week when all 14 other members including allies Britain, France and Italy condemned the decision, which broke with international consensus.

In an address last week from the White House, Trump insisted that after repeated failures to achieve peace, a new approach was long overdue, describing his decision to recognize Jerusalem as the seat of Israel’s government as merely based on reality.

The move was hailed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and by leaders across much of the Israeli political spectrum, but has continued to elicit rage in the Arab world.

The status of Jerusalem, a city holy to Christians, Jews and Muslims, is perhaps the most sensitive issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel sees the entire city as its undivided capital, while the Palestinians want the eastern sector, which Israel seized in the 1967 Six Day War and later annexed, as the capital of their future state.

Several UN resolutions call on Israel to withdraw from territory seized during the 1967 war.

In 1980, the council adopted a resolution stating that “all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, “the occupying power,” which purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal validity.”

Israeli and US officials have long accused the UN of harboring a bias against the Jewish state, citing the disproportionate amount of resolutions passed that criticize Israel.

### Choosing your words

A council diplomat said several draft texts had been shared informally but that the exact wording of the proposed draft resolution was key to ensure that all 14 council members vote in favor of the measure.

That would force the United States to resort to its veto power, a move that would highlight its isolation.

The Palestinians “actively want a US veto and they actively want the other 14 to stay together,” said the diplomat, who asked not to be named.

Some council members such as Britain, Japan and Ukraine are reluctant to back a toughly worded measure that would strongly condemn the US decision and demand its reversal.

But they would probably rally around a resolution that repeats previous language and expresses regret “about recent developments,” he said.

Backed by Arab countries, the Palestinians are also expected to ask the UN General Assembly to adopt a resolution condemning the US move.

The Palestinian campaign at the United Nations however is not intended to remove the United States from the peace process but rather to gain leverage on any future peace plan, diplomats said.

“This is not about pushing the US out of the picture. This is about them trying to shape the eventual content of a US-led proposal to be more in line” with the Palestinian stance, said a council diplomat.