For second week in a row, U.S. blocks U.N. call for probe into Gaza

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Although the Palestinians who burned tires and demonstrated at the Gaza border on Friday spoke in the name of human rights, their true intent is to destroy the Jewish state, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Saturday evening.  
  
Netanyahu, speaking at a Mimouna celebration in Gan Yavne, saluted IDF soldiers whom he said were “protecting us from those pretending to speak in the name of human rights, who wave the Nazi flag.”

“Did you see that?” he asked, referring to a video from Friday’s demonstrations showing a white flag with a large black swastika flying between two Palestinian flags. “That is the truth. They speak about human rights but in fact want to trample the Jewish state. We will not let them.”

For the second week in a row, the US on Friday blocked a UN Security Council statement calling for an independent probe into deadly clashes on the Gaza-Israel border while supporting the right of Palestinians to “demonstrate peacefully.”

Palestinian envoy to the UN Riyad Mansour claimed on Friday evening that 14 of the 15 Security Council members approved of the statement, with the lone holdout being the US, according to AFP. UN Security Council statements need to be approved by the five permanent members: the US, Russia, Britain, France and China.  
  
After Kuwait circulated the draft statement, Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon called on the Security Council instead to condemn Hamas for endangering the lives of children by using them as human shields and to “stop the provocations that only increase the violence and the tension.”  
  
“These riots were shown already last week to be violent outbursts and not peaceful protests,” Danon said.  
  
Mansour slammed the US for what he called its “very irresponsible” actions, adding that the move gave Israel “the green light to continue with their onslaught against the civilian population” in the coastal enclave.  
  
During a phone call last week, Netanyahu thanked US President Donald Trump for American support at the UN.  
  
Israel has rejected calls for an independent probe into the casualties, saying it can perform an impartial investigation without outside interference.  
  
Both the US and EU have designated Hamas as a terrorist organization for targeting innocent Israeli civilians since its inception in the late 1980s. Washington and Brussels, however, have different views of the recent weekly demonstrations.  
  
As she did last week, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini issued a statement on Saturday – without waiting for any clarification from Israel regarding the circumstances of the deaths or the identity of those killed – saying that the killing “raises serious questions about the proportionate use of force which must be addressed.”

The statement also said that “reports by the Israeli Defense Forces about throwing of stones and firebombs against their positions and attempts to cross the fence into Israel must also be clarified.”  
  
Neither the State Department nor the White House issued a statement after the incidents on Friday.  
  
On Thursday, however, US Mideast envoy Jason Greenblatt issued a statement placing the responsibility for what might happen during the protests on the Palestinians, rather than, as can be understood from the EU statement, on Israel.  
  
“The United States strongly urges protest leaders to communicate loudly and clearly that protesters should march peacefully; should abstain from all forms of violence; should remain outside the 500-meter buffer zone; and should not approach the border fence in any way or any location,” the statement read.  
  
“We condemn leaders and protesters who call for violence or who send protesters – including children – to the fence, knowing that they may be injured or killed. Instead, we call for a renewed focus by all parties on finding solutions to the dire humanitarian challenges facing Gazans.”  
  
The Prime Minister’s Office, meanwhile, challenged efforts by the Palestinians to portray the events as peaceful demonstrations by highlighting the incendiary rhetoric of Hamas leaders.  
  
For instance, Ofir Gendelman, Netanyahu’s Arabic-language spokesman, posted on Twitter a video of Hamas co-founder Mahmoud al-Zahar saying on Friday that, “We don’t know what is Palestine of 1948 or what are the 1967 borders. For us Palestine is all of Palestine.”  
  
Gendelman also posted a picture of a man donning a bandanna in the colors of the Palestinian flag and a face mask trying to cut a barbed wire fence with flames and black smoke in the background.  
  
“Hamas sent its terrorists to cut the border fence & to infiltrate into our territory under the cover of the smoke caused by thousands of burning tires,” he tweeted about the picture. “We foiled all these attempts.”