**UN Committee Takes No Action on Iran Envoy Dispute**

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April 22, 2014

ABC News

http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/committee-takes-action-iran-envoy-dispute-23429912

A U.N. committee took no action Tuesday on the U.S. refusal to grant a visa to Iran's chosen ambassador to the United Nations after hearing from both sides.

The Committee on Relations with the Host Country could have made a recommendation to the 193-member General Assembly or asked the U.N. legal office for an opinion.

Instead, Cypriot Ambassador Nicholas Emiliou, who chairs the committee, told reporters after the closed meeting that the issue remains on the committee's agenda "and we will revert to it if necessary."

President Barack Obama signed legislation on April 18 to block Ambassador Hamid Aboutalebi from entering the United States to become Iran's permanent representative to the U.N. because of his ties to the 1979 takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. Aboutalebi has insisted his involvement in the Muslim student group that held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days during the embassy takeover was limited.

Iran has accused the U.S. of setting a dangerous precedent by violating the right of sovereign states to designate representatives to the United Nations. Tehran has refused to designate another U.N. ambassador to replace Aboutalebi.

The dispute with the Obama administration comes at a very sensitive time as Tehran is attempting to thaw relations with Washington and reach agreement with the U.S. and five other world powers on a deal aimed at halting any potential Iranian attempt to build nuclear weapons.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters Tuesday in response to a question about the visa denial that "as far as we know this is a unique case involving a permanent representative."

At Tuesday's meeting, Emiliou said, "Iran and the United States presented their views on the well-known incident concerning the denial of visa to the new permanent representative of Iran."

"There was a discussion ... with the participation of several delegations," he said.

The United States was represented at the meeting by deputy ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo and Iran by its charge d'affaires, deputy ambassador Gholamhossein Dehghani.

According to diplomats at the meeting, speaking on condition of anonymity because the session was private, North Korea, Cuba and Belarus spoke up in support of Iran.

Dehghani told the committee that Aboutalebi "is a seasoned and well-known career diplomat who already served in three ambassadorial postings" and that the U.S. denial of a visa "flagrantly contravenes" the U.S. agreement with the U.N., which obliges the U.S. to promptly grant visas without regard to where they come from, according to a copy of his remarks released late Tuesday by Iran's U.N. mission.

Dehghani asked the U.N. legal counsel "to take all necessary measures to have the United States authorities abide by their legal obligations under the Headquarters Agreement." He also asked the committee to ask the U.S. to reconsider its decision not to give a visa to Aboutalabi, according to the mission's transcript.

The United States said it took its responsibility as host country for the United Nations very seriously but expressed longstanding concerns about Aboutalebi's admitted role in the hostage crisis, the diplomats said.

The U.S. said it was intolerable that someone involved in depriving U.S. diplomats of protection should be given diplomatic protection in the United States, the diplomats said.

They said that no other country spoke in support of the U.S. position.

The host committee also touched on another issue — the near impossibility for Iran to find a bank in New York to do business with because of U.S. and U.N. sanctions over its nuclear program.

Emiliou told reporters: "I expect to have positive developments on that in the near future."