U.S. can't stop Security Council talks on protection force for Palestinians

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US opposition hasn’t stopped United Nations Security Council members from holding closed-door talks in New York about the possibility of sending a UN force to protect Palestinians in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza.

A Monday meeting on a draft resolution for such a force submitted by Kuwait ended without any conclusions. The UNSC is expected to resume talks on the Kuwait draft during its closed-door session Wednesday on the Middle East, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The draft text “calls for measures to be taken to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in the Gaza Strip, including, inter alia, through the dispatch of an international protection mission.”

The United States, which is one of five permanent UNSC members with veto power, is expected to block any vote on such a text. European members of the UNSC are also likely to oppose the resolution in its current form.

British Deputy Ambassador to the UN in New York Jonathan Allen said that his country had not yet taken a position on the matter. The UK also has veto power at the council.

“We continue to negotiate with our colleagues in the council and in particular to get more information about what precisely is intended by a protection mission, what that means, and we will carry on having those negotiations,” Allen told reporters.

“At this stage, we will need to have more detail about what is planned and what is proposed and that is not yet clear to me, and when we get to a point of clarity, we will decide what to do,” Allen said.

Bolivian Ambassador to the UN in New York Sacha Sergio Llorenty Solíz told reporters his country backed the resolution.

“We believe it is time for the international community to uphold its responsibility in terms of protecting Palestinians. We hope that sooner than later we will have a draft on the floor to be voted on,” said Soliz.

When asked by reporters about the US role, he said, “We expect from every single member state to uphold international law and to comply with resolutions of the security council, but it seems that they [the US] believe they are above international law.”

The idea of an international protective force for Palestinians comes after almost eight weeks of violent Palestinian riots along Gaza’s border with Israel.

Hamas has claimed that IDF soldiers killed 102 Palestinians during the eight-week event, which has been dubbed the Great March of Return, in which protestors hoped to break down the border barrier and cross into Israel.

Israel has highlighted the violent nature of the protests, which included stones, Molotov cocktails, flaming kites and infiltration attempts. The Palestinian have charged that Israel is attacking peaceful protestors at events that drew thousands of Gaza residents.

Last week, the US blocked UNSC efforts to condemn IDF actions on the Gaza border and to launch an investigation. On Friday, the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, where there is no veto power, voted 29-2 to dispatch a commission of inquiry into IDF actions on the border. On Tuesday, the Palestinian Authority submitted information on Gaza border violence and Israeli settlement activity to the [International Criminal Court](https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/US-opposes-PA-going-to-ICC-as-counterproductive-counter-to-peace-558126).

Should Kuwait fail in its UNSC drive, the PA is likely to turn to the General Assembly on the issue.

The draft text of the resolution strongly condemns “the use of force by the Israeli occupying forces against Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and particularly in the Gaza Strip, in violation of international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and relevant resolutions and expresses its sorrow at the loss of innocent lives.”

It demands “that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately cease its military reprisals, collective punishment and unlawful use of force against civilians, including in the Gaza Strip.”

The resolution calls on all parties to exercise restraint and abide by international law.

It reaffirms the UNSC  “willingness to respond to situations of armed conflict where civilians are being targeted or humanitarian assistance to civilians is being deliberately obstructed, including through the consideration of appropriate measures at the Security Council’s disposal in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.”

The Kuwaiti text also calls on Israel to fully lift its “blockade” of Gaza and end all restriction on the flow of goods and pedestrian traffic at the two Israeli crossings into Gaza. It asks for increased humanitarian assistance for the people of Gaza.

The resolution calls on the UN to ensure accountability for violations of international law and asks the UN Secretary General to make recommendations within a month's time on “ways and means for ensuring the safety, protection and well-being of the Palestinian civilian population under Israeli occupation.”