**UN battles over flotilla probe**

Ban, UNHRC at odds over who should conduct the inquiry.

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NEW YORK – Conjecture about the UN Human Rights Council’s formation of its own body of inquiry to look into the May 31 Gaza flotilla incident was greeted with ambivalence by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s office on Wednesday.

The Geneva-based Human Rights Council probe, created by a council resolution on June 2, less than 48 hours after the incident itself, still has neither leadership nor members.

Despite media reports on Tuesday that Canadian Philippe Kirsch, who was a judge of the International Criminal Court from 2003 to 2009 and was the court’s first president, had been appointed to head the Human Rights Council probe, a spokeswoman from the council said no members have been selected, and specifically denied Kirsch’s involvement.

“Mr. Kirsch will not take part in the fact-finding mission to look into the Israeli raid on the Gaza flotilla,” public information officer Claire Kaplun told The Jerusalem Post.

A representative of the secretary-general’s office said Ban continues to advocate his plan for a separate flotilla probe, based at UN headquarters in New York. The secretary-general’s office refused to comment on the existence of a probe on the part of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

“We don’t have a comment on the HRC probe,” the secretary-general’s representative said. “The secretary-general’s proposal remains on the table, and we are hopeful of a positive response to it.”

As evidence of a noticeable rift between UN branches on the issue of a Gaza inquiry, there is no mention of the HRC’s inquiry on the UN’s main press Web site.

The president of the Human Rights Council, Thai diplomat Sihasak Phuangketkeow, is currently recruiting researchers and investigators for the inquiry, and will likely appoint members by the end of the week, Kaplun said.

The inquiry members will report on their findings to the Human Rights Council at its 15th session in September.