Palestinians ‘speed up’ bid for UNSC resolution against Israeli settlements

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By Tovah Lazaroff

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The Palestinian Authority intends to accelerate its attempt to pass a United Nations Security Council resolution against Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank, according to WAFA, the Palestinian News and Information Agency.

“The Palestinian leadership and in cooperation with the Arab League and the Arab ministerial group will hold contacts at the international level to speed up convening a Security Council session that should pass a resolution to stop settlements, which pose unprecedented and serious threat and creates a situation that would result in grave consequences,” said Nabil Abu Rude, who is a spokesman for PA President Mahmoud Abbas.

Israeli Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon condemned the announcement, reiterating Jerusalem's stance on such unilateral moves.

"Once again Palestinian leaders are turning to the UN instead of accepting our repeated invitation to negotiate directly," he said.

"These attempts will do nothing to better the lives the average Palestinian and should be utterly rejected by the international community," he said. Only a complete halt of Palestinian incitement and an end to all terror attacks against Israel will lead to the possibility of a real diplomatic process."

Abu Rude spoke just one day after Israel’s Higher Planing Council for Judea and Samaria debated plans with regard to 463 settler housing units. Out of those units, approval were given for 50 new homes, 179 units were retroactively legalized and plans were advanced for a senior housing project with 234-units.

Although the projects were all close to the pre-1967 lines, the international community was fairly harsh in its condemnation of the High Planning Council’s activities.

The US, the EU and France took issue not just with the building, but also with the retroactive legalization of 179 homes. The international community, has been particularly sensitive on the issue of illegal settler homes, even has it has persistently called on Israel to authorization illegal Palestinian structures in Area C of the West Bank.

“We are particularly troubled by the policy of retroactively approving unauthorized settlement units and outposts that are themselves illegal under Israeli law,” US State Department spokesman John Kirby said on Wednesday.

“These policies have effectively given the Israeli Government a green light for the pervasive advancement of settlement activity in a new and potentially unlimited way. This significant expansion of the settlement enterprise poses a very serious and growing threat to the viability of the two-state solution,” Kirby added.

The European Union said, “The Quartet report published last July identified such action as undermining the prospects for peace and steadily eroding the viability of the two-state solution and recommended that any expansion of settlements be frozen. The EU reiterates its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and all actions taken in this context.”

Even before the announcement of new settlement activity, the UN Nickolay Mladenov, the UN’s special coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process had spoken against what he called Israel’s “expanding footprint” in the West Bank when he delivered report on the matter to the UNSC in New York.

At the Palestinians request the UNSC in October plans to an Arria Formula meeting on Israel settlement activity. It’s the second such UNSC Arria Formula meeting on the Israeli-Palestinians conflict that has been held this year. The first one, which was held in May, dealt with the Palestinians call for international protection against Israel.

These meetings are informal gatherings of the security council that allow for the airing of issues, that might not get the same attention at the UNSC.

The Palestinians want the UNSC to formally deal with the issue of West Bank settlement activity, but so far have failed in their quest for a resolution on the matter.

The US has worked behind the scenes to dissuade member states from supporting a resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Its presume that such diplomatic activity swayed the UNSC not to issue a resolution with regard to the Quartet report on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which was published in July.

The US is one of five member states with veto power at the UNSC. Since US President Barack Obama took office in 2009 the UNSC has not issued a resolution against Israel. In 2011 the US vetoed a UNSC resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But in the last year the US has hinted that Israel should not rely on an automatic veto at the UNSC, fueling speculation that Obama might support such an initiative before he leaves office in January.