Senators Fear Obama Could Move Against Israel in Paris

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[President Obama](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/section/barack-obama) will have at least one more opportunity to affect U.S. policy on Israel, but a bipartisan group of senators — including leaders of both parties — want him to leave office quietly.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., lent their names to a Senate resolution that rebukes Obama for refusing to veto a United Nations Security Council resolution condemning Israeli settlement construction, which passed in the United Nations just before Christmas. But the senators clearly have other worries, most especially that a French-hosted Middle East Peace Conference scheduled for next week will provide one last forum for international action.

"When it comes to the U.S.-Israel alliance, we believe that senators of both parties must stand firmly with Israel and condemn efforts to undermine Israel's legitimacy," Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., said Wednesday. He introduced the resolution along with Maryland Sen. Ben Cardin, the top Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee.

The resolution has 22 cosponsors, evenly divided among Republicans and Democrats. It states opposition to any attempt to isolate Israel economically or "granting membership and statehood standing to the Palestinians at the United Nations." But the strongest language pertains to the Paris peace conference, which takes place on January 15.

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"[The Senate] demands that the United States ensure that no action is taken at the Paris Conference on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict scheduled for January 15, 2017, that imposes an agreement or parameters on the parties," the resolution said.

The State Department declined to rule out the possibility of supporting a resolution, drafted by France or another country, that attempts to codify the peace talk proposals offered by Secretary of State John Kerry in his Dec. 28 speech reinforcing U.S. opposition to Israeli settlement construction. "I don't think it would helpful for me to speculate about potential future actions," State Department spokesman John Kirby told reporters Wednesday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netayahu is worried that the Paris conference could be used to outline one final U.N. Security Council resolution that could pass before Obama leaves office on Jan. 20. "[The major effort] we are engaged in now is to prevent another UN resolution," Netanyahu told Israeli diplomats in Europe during a year-end meeting Tuesday, according to the [Jerusalem Post](http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Benjamin-Netanyahu/Netanyahu-invites-media-to-cover-event-then-dismisses-it-in-less-than-two-minutes-477384). "This will not take much time, but it will occupy us in the next two weeks, and we need to succeed."

Israel has already declined to participate in the Paris conference, but the Palestinians have agreed to join the talks because "they can only gain here," as a senior European Union official [told al-Monitor](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/01/israel-palestinians-france-sweden-paris-initiative.html).

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