Israel: Obama's Failure to Veto UN Resolution on Settlements Would Breach U.S. Commitment

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The United States would be breaching its long-standing commitment to Israel should it decides not to veto a UN Security Council draft resolution on settlements, a senior Israeli official said.

The official added that Israel expects the U.S. to act in accordance with its long-term policy, unhindered by changes in administration, according to which negotiations must be carried out directly between Israel and the Palestinians themselves.

Egypt presented the UN Security Council on Wednesday night with a draft resolution against Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Security Council vote is set to take place at 10:00 P.M. Israel time.

A decision not to veto the UN resolution would embody U.S. President Barack Obama's final attempt to "do something" against the settlements, the official said, noting that it would constitute the abandonment of traditional U.S. policy a moment before a new administration takes over.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier called on the U.S. to veto the motion, deeming it an "anti-Israel resolution." He then canceled his inauguration of a cyber center in the southern city of Be'er Sheva, which was scheduled for later on Thursday, in order to prepare for the vote.

France expected to back UN motion

The French ambassador to Israel said earlier on Thursday that the draft UN Security Council resolution against the settlements submitted by Egypt is balanced and matches France's position, and that she expects her country to support it.

In a briefing to diplomatic reporters, French Ambassador to Israel Helene Le Gal said the Egyptian draft resolution is more balanced than another version distributed to Security Council members two weeks ago by the Palestinians. The resolution, she said, does not talk about the settlements exclusively, but also speaks of the need to stop the violence and terrorism and to prevent all incitement from the Palestinian side.

“There is no decision yet. We voted for similar text before… and I assume the direction will be to support the Egyptian resolution,” Le Gal told the reporters.

Le Gal also said that it was Israel’s settlement policy, in particular the advancement of the outpost legalization bill, that pushed Egypt and the international community to promote an anti-settlement resolution in the Security Council. The statements by some Israeli ministers that Israel should launch a wave of settlement construction and take the two-state solution off the table also gave a push to the Security Council move, she added.

“A resolution in the Security Council has a lot of weight. If the resolution passes it will show both sides and especially Israel that the international community is very worried by the settlements and see them as an obstacle to peace. The tendency in Israel to say ‘the whole world is against us’ is wrong. We say all those things against the settlements because we are with Israel, not against it,” the ambassador said.