Palestinian Authority President to Address UN Human Rights Council

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Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas will address the UN Human Rights Council on Monday as it opens its 34 session in Geneva on Monday.

He will be the first of some 100 dignitaries to speak at the high level portion, that will last for three days, before the council begins to tackle issues relating to the death penalty, racial profiling and incitement to hate as well as country situations in Iran, Syria and Israel.

Abbas’s speech, which is expected to focus on Palestinian statehood, terrorism and instability in the Middle East, marks only the second time he has addressed the UNHRC during its high level portion. He last did so in 2015.

It comes just two weeks after US President Donald Trump made comments during a White House press conference with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that opened up the possibility that a two-state solution might not be the only way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“I’m looking at two states and one state. I am very happy with the one that both parties like,” Trump said.

In addition on Monday, the council will hear its first address from the new UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who took office at the start of this year.

On Wednesday, the council will hear from Erin Barclay, US deputy assistant secretary of state.

On March 20, under Agenda Item 7, the council will receive at least three reports charges that Israel has committed human rights abuses against Palestinians in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza. One report was authored by the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories Michael Lynk. The second reported was authored by Guterres’s office and the third by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein.

There will also be a report looking at the situation of human rights of the Druse on the Golan Heights.

Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria during the Six Day war and annexed it in 1981. It has now embarked on a campaign to push the United States to recognize its sovereignty over the Golan Heights, particularly in light of the ongoing civil war in Syria.

Israel has claimed that its hold on the Golan Heights is necessary for security reasons.

The UNHRC resolution calls on Israel to return the Golan Heights to Syria.

Its expected to issue a resolution to that effect during the 34th session, which ends March 24.

A similar resolution is voted on at every UNHRC session under Agenda Item 7.

The UNHRC is mandated to debate Israeli actions against Palestinians at every session through Agenda Item 7.

Israel is the only country against which there is such a mandate.

The council has delayed until later this year the presentation of a data base – known to Israelis as the black list – of international companies doing businesses with settlements and Jewish areas of Jerusalem over the pre-1967 lines.

At the end of January the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights was granted additional time, until no later than the end of 2017, to complete the data base.

It is part of a move by the UNHRC to help criminalize settlement activity within the arena of international law.