**French Follies**

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With more than 500,000 Syrian killed in a civil war that rages on, the European Union in turmoil after the Brexit vote, and terrorism markedly on the rise in Europe, diplomats around the world have chosen to focus their attention this week on creating a Palestinian state. Representatives from 70 countries are expected in Paris on Sunday for a planned Mideast peace conference doomed before it starts.

The fact that the meeting is taking place five days before a new administration takes over in Washington — one that appears to be more openly supportive of Israel — and two days before the U.N. Security Council is said to be voting on several anti-Israel resolutions, suggests that the international community is set on increasing the pressure on Israel. That’s no surprise. But since the U.S. abstained on last month’s Security Council resolution condemning Israeli settlements, there is increasing concern that the Obama administration may put forth its ideas on solutions, including borders, at the Paris meeting.

“Everyone knows, a priori,” that the conflict “can only be resolved by the parties themselves, no matter how many nations travel to Paris for the conference you are hosting,” AJC CEO David Harris wrote in an open letter to French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault this week. Harris pointed out that the conference is going forward even though Israel opposes the idea, Washington is undergoing a changing of the guard, and the French are less-than-honest brokers, given their votes against Israel in the Security Council and at a World Health Organization General Assembly in May when it “voted in favor of a measure that bizarrely singled out Israel by name as the only country in the world accused of undermining ‘mental, physical and environmental health.’”

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu offered last spring to meet with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, in Paris or elsewhere, for face-to-face talks on all issues, without pre-conditions. It was rejected, as usual.

As long as the PA believes that it can achieve statehood by avoiding, rather than negotiating, with Israel, no progress will be made. The Paris meeting only delays that possibility.