**Cruz calls on Trump administration to defund UN agencies that allow Palestinian membership**

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Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, has called on the Trump administration to act on two laws that demand automatic defunding of U.N.-affiliated agencies that have allowed the Palestinians to join as a state.

The two laws, passed by Congress in the early 1990s, were meant to deter the U.N. and specialized agencies from accepting the Palestinians as a full member and not to allow groups that aren’t recognized as a state to join.

In a statement to Fox News, Cruz said that “Congress has spoken clearly and repeatedly,” on the issue and that “the Palestinian campaign is a diplomatic offensive against Israel that undermines the prospect for peace, and there must be consequences for U.N. entities that enable and promote that behavior.”

Cruz pointed to the most recent example of a U.N. agency allowing them to join: “The law requires the Trump administration to restrict funding from agencies like the Universal Postal Union, and the administration should clearly convey to the Postal Union that it intends to enforce the law.”

According to its website, the Universal Postal Union has been a specialized U.N. agency since 1948. A month before the Palestinians said they would be joining in November, the Trump administration signaled it would seek to leave the union over the unfair financial advantages it gives to China and other nations at the expense of the United States.

A recent report by the non-partisan Jerusalem-based Kohelet Policy Forum on the subject giving recognition to the Palestinians has led to the politicization of the agencies that it joined.

Report author Eugene Kontorovich -- a law professor at the Antonin Scalia Law School at George Mason University in Virginia -- said the statutes were passed by an overwhelming bipartisan majority of Congress, “to deter the Palestinians from joining such organizations and to send a clear message to these organizations not to admit them.” He also said it was to save U.S. taxpayer dollars that had funded the organizations “that decided to be political arms of the Palestinian campaign of the deligitimization of Israel.”

The report estimated that U.S. taxpayers have shelled out close to $28 million to fund the four agencies it lists.

But while the Trump administration has reportedly threatened to defund the agencies, they have not yet done so.

“I think it's inexplicable in an administration which wants to critically evaluate the U.N., and is hostile to Palestinian unilateralism, is not implementing binding congressional statutes to defund these agencies,” Kontorovich said.

According to his report the Palestinian Authority has joined four U.N.-affiliated organizations in the past two years with the aim of seeking “a complete end-run around peace negotiations.”

The four include the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC.)

The report said the law has only been enforced one time and when the Palestinian’s joined UNESCO in 2011, “forcing a reluctant Obama administration to end U.S. funding, which constituted 22 percent of its budget.” The US quit the organization earlier this year. The report also criticized the Obama administration for not defunding the UNFCCC.

While a United States U.N. Mission spokesperson did not say why U.S. funding had not yet been halted to the agencies, they told Fox News: “The United States has long opposed enhancements of Palestinian status at the United Nations. We voted against Palestinian election as Chair of the G77. We opposed the General Assembly’s resolution designating the Palestinian delegation as a non-member Observer State.”

“We have consistently and formally objected to Palestinian accession to treaties to which we are a party," the spokesperson said. "That is because, as we have said repeatedly, the United States does not recognize that there is a Palestinian state.”

U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley has said that the Palestinian Authority’s tactic hurts the prospects for peace between the sides while at the same time doing nothing to help the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian Authority is a non-member observer state of the United Nations. So far this year it has reportedly looked to join at least 11 international organizations and statutes.