UNSC Won't Focus on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Under Nikki Haley Presidency

April 4, 2017

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The Jerusalem Post

<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/UNSC-will-not-discuss-Israeli-Palestinian-conflict-under-Nikki-Haley-presidency-486035>

For the first time in years, the United Nations Security Council will not focus its monthly open debate on the Middle East on Israel and the Palestinians, under the month-long presidency of US Ambassador Nikki Haley.

Haley, who presides over the Security Council for the month of April, told a news conference she would opt instead to push for UN peacekeeping reform and broader human rights issue, despite the opposition of some member states.

She intends to have the debate on April 20th revolve more around such issues as Iran’s support for terrorism, the Syrian crisis, Hezbollah and Hamas among others, Haley said, in her remarks on Monday.

“So much has been put towards Israel and the Palestinian authority and not enough has been put towards some of these other issues,” she said. “That is our goal for the Middle East open debate.”

Haley had come out strongly against the UN's anti-Israel bias just after her first Security Council meeting in February, saying the US will no longer tolerate this.

When asked by The Jerusalem Post if she worries that her pro-Israel approach could undermine a US role in mediating a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Haley said: “I don't worry about that because I’ve been honest.”

“All I have done is tell the truth. I've called it out like I see it and I'll continue to do that but there is no one that doesn't want to see a peace process between those two bodies,” she added.

“I think we all feel like it should happen, it can happen and we want to see it come together.”

Haley also said she urged the Palestinians to resume negotiations with Israel, during a meeting with the Palestinian Authority's envoy Riyad Mansour.

“I said that we are not going to support the Palestinian actions here at the UN until they came to the table,” Haley said.

“We don’t want to see any additional measures brought at the UN that would bash Israel or would lift up the Palestinian Authority until we can get these negotiations to happen.”

Haley added she believes the discussions that have taken place at the UN on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict so far “have been more of a hindrance towards the peace process than help, because it’s caused defensiveness to happen and that’s never healthy for anything.”

After Israel announced last week the first new government-sanctioned settlement in over two decades, against UN, Haley said she believes this was a response to Security Council Resolution 2334 passed in December.

“We want to see a pause on additional settlement,” she added. “My hope is that we have willingness from both sides coming together to really allow for that conversation to take place.”

Haley said that as a “transparency girl”, she has also decided to make all but three of the month’s Security Council meetings open to the press.

“Being president of the Security Council is intimidating and very busy and I am still in learning mode,” she said.

“This administration is looking at the UN with fresh eyes. I hope you see leadership from the United States.”

Israel’s UN Ambassador Danny Danon said he saw Haley’s presidency as a turning point for Israel.

“We've been very impressed with Ambassador Haley and her stance at the UN,” he told the Post. “The council can be a very important body, but it needs to reorient its attention.”

“There is no doubt that the UN is on notice about the winds of change which have blown in from Washington,” Danon added. “They are not going to tolerate an obsessive focus on Israel with so many other crises around the world.”

“Everywhere you see terror and travesties in the region, you see Iran,” he said. “If you are going to have a periodical meeting on the situation on the Middle East, then Iran must be the main focus,” Danon said.