Ahead of UN vote on probe, Israel says measure shows ‘contempt’ for its security

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Ahead of an upcoming United Nations General Assembly vote on whether to ask the International Court of Justice to weigh in on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an Israeli official said Thursday that the Palestinians “are trying to render Israel’s security presence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem illegal.”

Support for the resolution shows “contempt for and dismissal of Israeli security concerns,” the official added in a briefing with Israeli journalists.

The resolution, titled “Israeli practices and settlement activities affecting the rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories,” requests that the Hague-based ICJ “render urgently an advisory opinion” on Israel’s “prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation of Palestinian territory.”

The UNGA vote is not yet scheduled, but will occur before the end of the year, within days.

The resolution passed the UN General Assembly Fourth Committee in November, with 98 supporting, 17 opposing, and 52 abstaining.

Israel “sees a chance to raise the number of countries opposed,” said the official, “but many factors influence that.”

“We know that there is an automatic majority.”

Israel is trying to get more “like-minded” democratic countries to oppose the measure or at least abstain. Of the 27 European countries in the Fourth Committee, 21 did not support the measure.

“I think a lot of countries didn’t see it as a constructive step,” the official continued. “Even if they don’t agree with our policies, they oppose this step.”

Israel has reached out to around 100 countries, including 60 that received letters from Prime Minister Yair Lapid. President Isaac Herzog has also called world leaders on the issue.

In his [letter](https://www.timesofisrael.com/lapid-to-world-leaders-stop-palestinian-push-to-refer-conflict-to-the-hague/), Lapid called the Palestinian campaign, “a concerted effort to single out Israel, to discredit our legitimate security concerns, and to delegitimize our very existence.”

The missive was sent to European partners, including the United Kingdom, France, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Georgia, and Latvia.

Further afield, the leaders of Brazil, Uruguay, Peru and Vietnam also received the letter.

“The Palestinians want to replace negotiations with unilateral steps. They are again using the United Nations to attack Israel,” Lapid charged after the resolution passed.

In the letter, he used similar language, arguing that bringing the conflict before the ICJ contradicts the principle of direct negotiations. It also “will only play into the hands of extremists, further polarize the parties, and undermine the positive work that has been done over the past few years,” he wrote.

The Biden administration has also been extremely helpful in advocating against the measure, the official said.

After the November vote, the United States representative to the committee, Richard Mills, expressed “serious concerns” about the resolution, saying it would “magnify distrust” surrounding the conflict.

“There are no shortcuts to a two-state solution,” he said.

If the vote passes, the ICJ will present a schedule in the coming weeks for countries and NGOs to offer their legal positions. The 15-judge panel will likely offer their advisory opinion in one-to-two years.

“The Palestinians are trying to create activity in the international arena instead of focusing on the real challenges that we see on the ground,” said the official, pointing at attacks by terrorist groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

The ICJ last issued an advisory opinion on the conflict in 2004.