UAE Cancels UN Vote on Israel's Settlements

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The [United Arab Emirates](https://www.haaretz.com/ty-tag/united-arab-emirates-0000017f-da33-d718-a5ff-fab79a270000) told the UN Security Council that it will not call a vote on Monday on a draft resolution demanding Israel ‘immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory,’ according to a note seen by Reuters.

‘Given the positive talks between the parties, we are now working on a draft PRST [presidential statement] which would garner consensus,’ the note, send on Sunday, said. ‘Accordingly, there will not be a vote on the draft resolution on Monday. Much of the language of the PRST will be drawn from the draft resolution.’

The text of the resolution ‘reaffirms that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law.’

It also condemns all attempts at annexation, including decisions and measures by Israel regarding settlements.

The Emirates' announcement is a significant achievement for the Biden administration, which has exerted heavy pressure on the Palestinian Authority and Israel in recent days with the aim of reaching an understanding that would lower the flames and set forth calm on a number of fronts, for fear of escalation ahead of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan.

The contacts included a promise by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas not to turn to the United Nations, and in return Israel would freeze the plans it had announced.

Senior officials in the Palestinian Authority who were involved in the talks on the proposed resolution in the Security Council reportedly received messages from the administration in Washington that the U.S. intended to veto any resolution that condemned Israel, and therefore a proposal to issue a statement by the presidency of the Security Council with the consent of the Americans was born.

According to a senior Palestinian official in Ramallah, the announcement does not mean a withdrawal from the demands presented in the resolution, but on the contrary — it is a type of coordination that will lead allow the PA to avoid a conflict with the Americans on the one hand, while also giving it an opportunity to check the extent to which the administration will really act against the Netanyahu government: ‘We have to remember that with the [former Bennett-Lapid government in Israel] the U.S. administration refused to promote any move that would isolate the [Israeli] government. And today, a month and a half after the establishment of Netanyahu's new government, the world is already reacting and putting things in perspective regarding Israel's aggression, while emphasizing that the option to return to the Security Council is always there.’

‘We were not in a situation of voting in the Security Council or not voting, the situation was a clear — American veto or a presidential statement that will emphasize the Palestinian position in relation to the steps taken by Israel,’ said the official, adding that ‘the question now is whether Netanyahu will really curb his far-right ministers' actions, or will he renounce any understanding [reached] with the Americans.’

Among the leadership in Ramallah, there is reportedly now an expectation that Washington will act to prevent Israel from constructing settlements and establishing new outposts, [demolishing houses in East Jerusalem](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-02-13/ty-article/.premium/30-injured-in-clashes-as-israeli-forces-demolish-homes-in-east-jerusalem-palestinians-say/00000186-4b4f-dede-afa6-6fdfb9d70000), and harming the conditions of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

Sources familiar with the details say that as part of the agreement, the Israeli military would not enter West Bank cities under Palestinian control except in cases of a so-called ticking time bomb ahead of a terror attack.

Abbas believes that the ongoing raids by the Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank, which have led to the arrest of junior activists and minors, have been conducted to satisfy the new right-wing government as well as the Israeli public.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government [authorized nine Jewish settler outposts](https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/2023-02-15/ty-article/.premium/west-bank-outposts-israel-decided-to-legalize-are-on-disputed-lands/00000186-555f-df98-abb6-57dfc1bd0000)in the occupied West Bank on Sunday and announced [mass construction of new homes in established settlements](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-02-14/ty-article/.premium/netanyahu-gives-in-to-far-right-ally-at-the-expense-of-u-s-israel-ties/00000186-5158-d02c-af9e-d3fab02a0000), prompting U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken to say he was ‘deeply troubled.’

Blinken spoke with Netanyahu early on Sunday, and told him that the U.S. is against any unilateral measures that could lead to an escalation in the region.

Senior American officials, including Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Barbara Leaf, conveyed to political and security officials in Israel that the U.S. would have [difficulty exercising its veto power](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-02-17/ty-article/u-s-calls-palestinian-un-resolution-on-israeli-settlements-unhelpful/00000186-5e24-ddc1-adb7-7e7406600000) at the UN on a number of issues. They specifically mentioned issues connected to the Palestinians, at a time when Israel is promoting unilateral measures in the West Bank.

Top Israeli officials briefed on the content of the talks say the Americans made it clear that the Israeli government's intention to build thousands of housing units in the settlements and to legalize a number of outposts would make it difficult for the Americans to veto any resolution due to international pressure.

In December 2016 the Security Council demanded Israel stop building in the settlements. It adopted that resolution after U.S. President Barack Obama’s administration abstained from voting on it, a reversal of its practice to protect Israel from UN action.