US-Israel tensions rise as Washington backs UNSC settlement condemnation

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<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-732168>

Tensions between Jerusalem and Washington rose on Monday as the United Nations Security Council issued a rare consensus statement of ‘dismay’ and ‘concern’ over [Israeli settlement activity](https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-732073).

It was a move that could only have happened with the support of the Biden administration.

‘The statement should never have been made, and the United States should never have joined it,’ the Prime Minister’s Office said in a statement.

‘The UN [Security Council](https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-732131) has issued a one-sided statement which denies the rights of Jews to live in our historic homeland, [and] fails to mention the [Palestinian terror attacks in Jerusalem](https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-731208) in which 10 Israeli civilians were murdered,’ it said.

The statement also ‘ignores the Palestinian Authority’s grotesque pay-for-slay policy, which subsidizes the murder of Jews, and belittles the evil of antisemitism, which has resulted in the slaughter of millions,’ it added.

The last three US administrations have strongly backed Israel’s contention that the UN is biased against it and that statements and resolutions stem from prejudice rather than any specific issue. Washington has used its veto power at the UNSC to protect Israel.

The last time the UNSC issued a consensus statement against Israel like the one published on Monday was during Operation Protective Edge in the Gaza Strip in 2014. The UNSC in 2016 also approved resolution 2334 against settlement activity, with the US abstaining rather than vetoing.

**US supports UNSC condemnation**

The Biden administration’s approval of Monday’s UNSC consensus presidential statement reflected its growing frustration with Israel over settlement activity, particularly the security cabinet’s authorization this month of 10 West Bank outposts to become [nine new settlements](https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-731389).

It was also upset that the Higher Planning Council for Judea and Samaria plans to meet on Wednesday to advance plans for thousands of new homes.

The Security Council in its consensus statement said it ‘strongly underscored’ the need for Israel to halt its ‘construction and expansion of settlements, confiscation of Palestinians’ land, and the ‘legalization’ of settlement outposts.’

The two-page document issued in New York also called on Israel to stop the ‘demolition of Palestinians’ homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians.’

The United Arab Emirates, which normalized ties with Israel under the Abraham Accords, submitted the statement on behalf of the PA.

The PA had sought a more consequential UNSC resolution but backed away when it understood that the US would veto the text. A compromise was reached in which the US would support a UNSC statement that dealt with issues beyond settlement activity.

The UNSC recalled ‘the obligation of the PA to renounce and confront terror,’ condemned ‘all acts of terrorism’ and called for the ‘strengthening of ongoing efforts to counter terrorism in a manner consistent with international law.’

It also spoke of its concern regarding ‘discrimination, intolerance and hate speech motivated by racism or directed against persons belonging to religious communities, in particular cases motivated by Islamophobia, antisemitism or Christianophobia.’

UNSC members in the statement affirmed their commitment to a two-state resolution to the conflict and to the status quo on Jerusalem’s Temple Mount, including Jordan’s special connection to the site known to Muslims as al-Haram al-Sharif.

Absent from the document was any direct reference to Palestinian terrorism, the PA’s monthly stipends to terrorists and their families and any reference to the Palestinian terrorist attacks in Jerusalem at a synagogue and a bus stop.

US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield condemned those attacks when she addressed the UNSC’s monthly meeting Monday on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before she launched into her statements of ‘strong’ opposition to Israeli settlement activity.

‘These unilateral measures exacerbate tensions,’ she said. ‘They harm trust between the parties. They undermine the prospects for a negotiated two-state solution. The United States does not support these actions. Full stop.’

‘The clear and longstanding position of the United States is that settlement activity is unhelpful and puts us further away from a negotiated, two-state solution.

‘That’s why we strongly support the Presidential Statement, put forward by the United Arab Emirates, which demonstrates the Security Council’s unanimous, collective voice on these issues.’

The UNSC statement ‘is real diplomacy at work, and we believe it signifies to all parties how seriously this Council takes these threats to peace,’ Thomas-Greenfield said.

[Israeli Ambassador to the UN Gilad Erdan](https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-708802) read out the names of the Israeli victims of the Jerusalem terrorist attacks this year and stood for a moment of silence in their memory as he took the UNSC to task for condemning Israeli settlement activity without also speaking out against those responsible for their deaths.

PA Ambassador to the UN Riyad Mansour welcomed the UNSC statement and thanked the UAE, adding that Israeli settlement activity was moving in the direction of annexation.

The resolution had the support of 14 of the 15 UNSC members for a resolution. It was more than enough to ensure its passage, but the Biden administration did not want to exercise its veto, Mansour said.

The PA backed away from a resolution in exchange for a US-backed statement because it was certain that continued Israeli settlement activity would soon force a UNSC resolution with US support, he said.

‘We believe that this Israeli government most likely will continue to violate international law and would force the Security Council to act again,’ Mansour said. ‘If we are united, even those who protect Israel and who are very close to Israel, when they oppose its policy and actions, it means that they moved one step in the right direction. If bigger things happen, it will be difficult for them not to take further steps.’

UAE Ambassador to the UN Lana Zaki Nusseibeh said: ‘The intention was always to create space for diplomacy and dialogue... It was important that the UNSC spoke with one voice and that the draft resolution still remains in circulation.’

Mansour said this meant it would take only 24 hours to bring the resolution back to the UNSC.

‘The question of Palestine cannot be marginalized at the UN,’ he said.