Biden admin 'perplexed' by Netanyahu decision to cancel Israeli delegation

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<https://www.foxnews.com/world/biden-admin-perplexed-netanyahu-decision-cancel-israeli-delegation>

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said the [Biden administration](https://www.foxnews.com/category/person/joe-biden) is ‘perplexed’ by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s decision to cancel a high-level delegation’s planned visit to Washington after the U.S. decided not to veto a U.N. Security Council vote demanding a cease-fire in Gaza.

Monday’s resolution, which passed 14-0, called for an immediate cease-fire during the ongoing Muslim holy month of Ramadan. It also demanded the release of all hostages taken captive during Hamas' Oct. 7 surprise attack in southern Israel. However, the measure does not link that demand to its call for a cease-fire.

Rather than use its veto power, the U.S. abstained from voting. The U.S. has previously vetoed three resolutions calling for a Gaza cease-fire.

Kirby noted that the resolution is ‘nonbinding,’ meaning that there will be no impact on Israel or its ability to continue waging war on Hamas.

Kirby said the abstention did not represent a change in U.S. policy despite public statements from the prime minister’s office.

‘We get to decide what our policy is. It seems like the Prime Minister’s office is choosing to create a perception of daylight here when they don’t need to do that,’ Kirby said.

Kirby said the U.S. had vetoed other resolutions in the past, and chose not to support this one, because it did not condemn Hamas.

‘We didn’t veto [Monday’s resolution] because, in general, unlike previous resolutions, this one did fairly capture what has been our consistent policy, which is linking a hostage deal and the release of those men and women with a temporary ceasefire,’ Kirby said.

Monday’s resolution demands the release of hostages but does not make it a condition for the cease-fire for the month of Ramadan, which ends in April. Hamas welcomed the U.N.’s move but said the cease-fire needed to be permanent.

Netanyahu accused the U.S. of ‘retreating’ from a ‘principled position’ by allowing the vote to pass without conditioning the cease-fire on the release of the hostages held by Hamas.

Meanwhile, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant was set to meet with U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and others Monday in Washington where discussions would continue.

The U.S. abstention comes amid growing tensions between President Joe Biden's administration and Netanyahu over Israel's prosecution of the war, the high number of civilian casualties and the limited amounts of humanitarian assistance reaching Gaza.

In addition, the well-known antagonism between Netanyahu and Biden deepened after Biden questioned Israel's strategy in combating Hamas.

The situation was made worse after Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a Biden ally, suggested in a speech last week that Netanyahu was not operating in Israel's best interests and called for Israel to hold new elections. Biden signaled his approval of Schumer's remarks, prompting a rebuke from Netanyahu.

During its U.S. visit, the [Israeli delegation](https://www.foxnews.com/politics/netanyahu-cancels-israeli-delegations-trip-washington-us-fails-veto-un-cease-fire-resolution) was to present White House officials with its plans for a possible ground invasion of Rafah, a city on the Egyptian border in southern Gaza where over 1 million Palestinian civilians have sought shelter from the war.

Since the start of the war, the Security Council has adopted two resolutions on the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, but none has called for a cease-fire.

Israeli Energy Minister said Israel ‘will continue to fight until the safe return of the hostages and the [eradication of Hamas](https://www.foxnews.com/category/world/terrorism).’

‘Any proposal for a ceasefire lacking these stipulations serves as a propellant for terrorist organizations around the world, inevitably ushering terrorism into the West,’ he said.

Anne Bayefsky, Director of the Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust and president of Human Rights Voices said the Biden administration’s ‘failure to veto this resolution should send shock waves around the United States.’

‘Last week they ‘demanded’ the UN Security Council finally condemn Hamas for the October 7th atrocities - which the Council has never done. The Arab group of states, the Russians and Chinese said no. Two days later the moral backbone of the administration collapses and it allows the third Council resolution since October 7th that fails to condemn its perpetrators,’ Bayefsky said.

She argued that U.S. ‘strength and credibility has taken a tremendous hit – to the detriment of Israel, the Jewish people and America.’

More than 32,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed during the fighting, according to Gaza’s Hamas-run Health Ministry, though Israel has disputed these figures. The agency does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count, but says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead.

The United States has vetoed three resolutions demanding a cease-fire in Gaza, the most recent an Arab-backed measure on Feb. 20. That resolution was supported by 13 council members with one abstention, reflecting the overwhelming support for a cease-fire.