Congress Members Tell Obama: Use Veto Power Against PA

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U.S. President Barack Obama is facing congressional pressure to torpedo a bid to advance Palestinian statehood at the United Nations.

In a letter dated April 8, six prominent members of the U.S. House of Representatives urged the president to use his leverage to prevent the passage of a U.N. Security Council resolution calling Israeli settlements illegal or imposing an Israeli withdrawal.

"We share your frustration with the lack of significant progress toward a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians ... [but] only the parties themselves can agree to end their conflict through a negotiated resolution," they wrote. The letter was signed by three subcommittee heads, including Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, chairwoman of the Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, as well as by three members of the same subcommittees.

"It is only at the negotiating table, and not at the U.N., that the parties can resolve their complicated differences. Your continued commitment to long-standing U.S. policy to veto one-sided U.N. Security Council resolutions remains fundamentally critical," they wrote.

The group stressed that the U.S. should "maintain its indispensable role of mediator" by closely coordinating its moves with "our democratic ally Israel" and by refusing "to support counterproductive efforts aimed at imposing a solution." As such, they said they were "deeply troubled by reports that one-sided initiatives may arise at the U.N. in the coming months concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Such efforts dangerously hinder the prospects for resuming direct negotiations."

They concluded with an offer to join forces with the president.

"We are ready to assist you in these efforts and we look forward to your response," they wrote.

In a recent interview, Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riad Malki expressed hope that Obama would let the Security Council vote on a resolution against Israel because he is about to leave office. The Palestinians have recently indicated they might revive a draft resolution against Israel's policies in Judea and Samaria. The resolution was vetoed in 2011 by the U.S.