Cape Verde denies it’ll start backing Israel at the UN

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Cape Verde on Tuesday denied that it had decided it will no longer to vote against Israel at the United Nations, days after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took credit for the West African nation’s ostensible new policy.

Responding to various news reports about the matter, Cape Verde confirmed its desire to advance relations with Israel, but indicated that its recent contacts with Jerusalem have not led to a change in Israel’s favor in its traditional voting patterns at international organizations.

In a statement [posted on Tuesday on his Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/Presidencia.cv/?hc_ref=ARRPZmZWt4hD29bIW1og2kpXcT4yRfYgPwkqHJWUL-FpGGm-kfiqDykjhUuppq7kgcw&fref=nf), the president of the African archipelago nation, Jorge Carlos Fonseca, explained that his country’s constitution puts the government and not the president in charge of foreign policy. While the president is head of state, it is the nation’s prime minister who is the head of government.

“In this context, the president of the republic supports the foreign policy guidelines defined by the government that privileges relations with the CPLP [Community of Portuguese Language Countries], the European Union, ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States], the United States of America, China, Brazil and Israel,” the statement read.

During a meeting at the June 4 ECOWAS summit in Monrovia, Fonseca and Netanyahu discussed advancing bilateral cooperation in the fields of agriculture, energy, tourism, security, the statement added.

However, “specific aspects of Cape Verdean diplomacy, such as voting processes in different international forums, as well as the mechanisms for their implementation, through representatives of Cape Verde, were not addressed, let alone discussed,” the post clarified. The presidency has no right to interfere with the government’s foreign policy, it said.

Also on Tuesday, Cape Verde’s presidency denied that the fact that it had retweeted Netanyahu’s post on the country’s ostensible new policy meant it was endorsing the Israeli leader’s message.

In a [second statement](https://www.facebook.com/Presidencia.cv/posts/1494537323918293) posted on the presidency’s Facebook page, it expressed “regret” over a [newspaper report](https://santiagomagazine.cv/index.php/politica/323-cabo-verde-apoia-israel-presidencia-da-republica-assume-tweet-de-benjamin-netanyahu) that had claimed the president’s “automatic retweet” of Netanyahu’s post is to be seen as an endorsement of its content.

On August 2, Netanyahu’s office announced that Cape Verde had declared it would no longer to vote against Israel at the UN, noting that the country’s ostensible decision came two months after the prime minister met Fonseca at the ECOWAS summit in Monrovia. “I welcome the decision of the president of Cape Verde. This is the result of intensive diplomatic activity between Israel and Africa,” Netanyahu said in a statement.

He repeated the matter several times in Facebook and Twitter posts. “Last week Cape Verde announced that it will not vote against us in UN institutions. This is important and it attests to success,” he said at Sunday’s cabinet meeting.

The Israeli Prime Minister’s Office and the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem declined to comment Wednesday on the Cape Verdean statements.

But an Israeli diplomatic official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Cape Verde months ago told Israel’s ambassador, Paul Hirschson, that it had decided to stop voting against Israel in international forums. “This was confirmed by local press reports in Cape Verde,” the official said.

“We are aware that there is significant Arab pressure against the Israeli initiative to strengthen ties with Africa. We assume that the statement of the president of Cape Verde is a product of this pressure.”

Cape Verde, a mostly Christian country, has about 525,000 inhabitants.

Netanyahu has declared diplomatic outreach to Africa as one of this key foreign policy objectives, hoping to break the traditional anti-Israel majority in international organizations such as the UN. In the last 14 months, he has visited the continent twice and is currently planning to attend a major Africa-Israel summit in Togo in October.