

UN General Assembly to Meet on Jerusalem Status



The United Nations Security Council meets on the situation in the Middle East, including Palestine, at U.N. Headquarters in New York City, New York, U.S., December 18, 2017. Credit: Reuters/Brendan McDermid

United Nations: The 193-member United Nations General Assembly will hold a rare emergency special session on Thursday at the request of Arab and Muslim states on US President Donald Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital, sparking a warning from Washington that it will "take names."

Palestinian UN envoy Riyad Mansour said the General Assembly would vote on a draft resolution calling for Trump's declaration to be withdrawn, which was vetoed by the US in the 15-member UN Security Council on Monday.

The remaining 14 Security Council members voted in favour of the Egyptian-drafted resolution, which did not specifically mention the US or Trump but which expressed "deep regret at recent decisions concerning the status of Jerusalem."

Mansour said on Monday he hoped there would be "overwhelming support" in the General Assembly for the resolution. Such a vote is non-binding, but carries political weight.

US ambassador Nikki Haley, in a letter to dozens of UN states on Tuesday seen by Reuters, warned that the US would remember those who voted for the resolution criticising the US decision.

"The president will be watching this vote carefully and has requested I report back on those countries who voted against us. We will take note of each and every vote on this issue," Haley wrote.

She echoed that call in a Twitter post: "The US will be taking names."

Under a 1950 resolution, an emergency special session can be called for the General Assembly to consider a matter "with a view to making appropriate

recommendations to members for collective measures” if the Security Council fails to act.

Only ten such sessions have been convened, and the last time the General Assembly met in such a session was in 2009 on occupied East Jerusalem and Palestinian territories. Thursday’s meeting will be a resumption of that session.

Trump abruptly reversed decades of US policy this month when he recognised Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, generating outrage from Palestinians and the Arab world and concern among Washington’s Western allies.

Trump also plans to move the US embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv. The draft UN resolution calls on all countries to refrain from establishing diplomatic missions in Jerusalem.

Haley said on Monday that the resolution was vetoed in the Security Council in defense of US sovereignty and the US role in the Middle East peace process. She criticised it as an insult to Washington and an embarrassment to council members.

Israel considers Jerusalem its eternal and indivisible capital and wants all embassies based there. Palestinians want the capital of an independent Palestinian state to be in the city’s eastern sector, which Israel captured in a 1967 war and annexed in a move never recognised internationally.

(Reuters)

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