

John Kerry Assures Israel There Will Be No New UN Action

Israeli officials said over the weekend that Secretary of State John Kerry had reached out to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to assure him that no new “U.N. actions” would be taken during the Paris “peace summit” attended by 70 countries.

Neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians attended the meetings, and Netanyahu called it a “futile” attempt to force a “two-state solution” on Israel. Kerry, according to a statement issued by the prime minister’s office, called to inform Netanyahu “about the moves the U.S. was taking at the conference to soften the wording of the Paris communique.”

According to the same statement, Netanyahu relied that “Israel had already suffered damage” after the U.S. did not veto Security Council Resolution 2334 and it should not be compounded. Kerry pledged the U.S. would “oppose any proposal” put forward by the Security Council.

President-elect Donald Trump and Members of Congress from both parties are already pushing to have Resolution 2334 repealed. So, while Kerry’s comments were signaled as good news for Israel, there still remains cause to keep a watchful eye on the UN in the days ahead.

The resulting Paris communiqué signed by 70 countries Sunday reaffirmed that only a “two-state solution” could resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It also warned that any one-sided steps taken—a thinly veiled swipe at both Netanyahu and Trump—could damage future peace negotiations.

The message also “reaffirmed” Resolution 2334, which has

become a driving force for those who seek to not only “defund” the U.N.—the U.S. provides approximately 22 percent of its general funding and 28 percent of its “peacekeeping” budget—but to expel the world body’s New York City headquarters from U.S. soil. This was, apparently, a point of contention for several of the nations in the meeting.

Incoming U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is planning to meet with senators in Washington, D.C., to find a way beyond Resolution 2334 to maintain UN funding. It’s not entirely clear that he’s actually done so, or if he has, that it’s had any impact on legislation introduced by Sens. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) to defund the U.N. until Resolution 2334 is repealed.

The French, meanwhile, had pushed hard for a statement that would force both Israel and the Palestinians to the negotiating table. The United Kingdom, however, criticized those efforts, saying they risked “hardening positions” on both sides.

The Foreign Office issued the following statement after the Paris communiqué was released:

We have particular reservations about an international conference intended to advance peace between the parties that does not involve them—indeed which is taking place against the wishes of the Israelis—and which is taking place just days before the transition to a new American President when the U.S. will be the ultimate guarantor of any agreement. There are risks therefore that this conference hardens positions at a time when we need to be encouraging the conditions for peace.

Despite voting for Resolution 2334, Prime Minister Theresa May has been more closely aligning herself with Trump. She blasted Kerry after his “farewell speech” in which he labeled the Israeli government under Netanyahu “the most right-wing in

Israeli history.”

Britain attended the Paris talks merely as an observer. It did not participate in the negotiations, nor did it sign onto the Paris communiqué.

“This conference is among the last twitches of the world of yesterday,” Netanyahu told his Cabinet Sunday. “Tomorrow will look different and that tomorrow is very close.”

“Tomorrow” is likely the incoming Trump administration, which has promised to work much more closely with Netanyahu, and has pledged to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem. This was a move that both France and the Palestinian Authority railed about during the Paris summit.

Kerry said on Sunday it would have been “inappropriate” to include the Trump administration’s plans in the Paris communiqué. He said that was an issue that needed to be discussed and decided by the American people.

“It is being debated publicly at home and does not belong within international fora at this moment in time,” he said. “It’s inappropriate.” {eoa}