

UN Defies Trump by Passing Resolution on Jerusalem

by Kambiz Foroohar via shirl - Bloomberg *Friday, Dec 22 2017, 2:09am*

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The United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly backed a measure critical of President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel despite U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley's warning that the move could put funding for their nations and the global body at risk.

The non-binding UN resolution passed on Thursday by a vote of 128-9, with 35 nations abstaining. The U.S. vote in opposition was joined by countries including Guatemala, Nauru and Micronesia. Key abstentions came from Australia, Canada, Argentina and Romania.

"The United States will remember this day when it was singled out for attack in the General Assembly," Haley said at the United Nations podium ahead of the vote. "We will remember it when so many countries come calling on us, as they often do, to pay even more. This vote will be remembered."

The U.S. threat was repudiated by speakers from countries supporting the resolution, which says the status of Jerusalem must be resolved through negotiations. A similar resolution had 14 votes in favor in the 15-member Security Council last week, prompting Haley to exercise the first U.S. veto since 2011.

"We were all asked to vote no or face the consequences," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said before voting began. "Some even threatened to cut development aid. This is bullying. It is unethical to think that the votes and dignity of member states are for sale."

The debate follows Trump's Dec. 6 announcement, which included a decision to begin moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv. The announcement prompted criticism across the Middle East and from key U.S. allies in Europe, who said it would harm efforts to foster Middle East peace.

Palestinian officials said Trump's decision disqualified the U.S. from being a mediator in any Israel-Palestinian negotiations.

Haley's threat carries weight because the U.S. is the largest contributor to UN operations. Based on a formula agreed to by member nations, the U.S. provides 28.5 percent of the \$7.3 billion UN peacekeeping budget and 22 percent of the core budget of \$2.7 billion. Haley walked out of the General Assembly soon after her speech, though members of the U.S. delegation remind behind, awaiting the vote.

Except for Israel, which supports the U.S. position, most major U.S. allies opposed to Trump's decision stayed away from the podium Thursday. Countries speaking in support of the measure included North Korea, Yemen, Turkey, Venezuela, Cuba, Syria, South Africa and Iran. Those nations also came under intense fire by Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon.

'Puppet Masters'

"Those who support today's resolution are like puppets pulled by the strings of the Palestinian puppet masters," Danon said. "If this body were really united for peace, it would pass a resolution condemning Palestinian violence."

Haley this week warned other countries against supporting the resolution, saying Trump "has requested I report back on those countries who voted against us."

Trump weighed in on the Jerusalem vote on Wednesday.

"I liked the message that Nikki sent yesterday at the United Nations to all of those nations that take our money and then they vote against us in the Security Council, they vote against us potentially at the assembly," Trump said. "They take hundreds of millions of dollars and even billions of dollars and then they vote against us. Well, we're watching those votes. Let 'em vote against us."

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