**Kuwait blocks UN statement criticizing Palestinian leader**

Washington Post

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May 4, 2018

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/us-asks-un-to-criticize-abbas-vile-anti-semitic-slurs/2018/05/04/ddff1ed4-4fc3-11e8-85c1-9326c4511033_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.99b0d557649c>

Kuwait blocked the U.N. Security Council on Friday from issuing a U.S.-sponsored statement sharply criticizing Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for what Washington called “vile anti-Semitic slurs and baseless conspiracy theories.”

Kuwait is the Arab representative on the 15-member council and two diplomats said it opposed the press statement on grounds that it was not comprehensive. The diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity because consultations were private.

Abbas issued an apology earlier Friday over remarks in his speech Monday to the Palestine Liberation Organization parliament, which was sharply condemned as anti-Semitic by Israel, the U.S., U.N., European Union and others.

In the lengthy speech, he said it was the Jews’ ”social function,” including money lending, which caused animosity toward them in Europe. He also described the creation of Israel as a European colonial project, saying “history tells us there is no basis for the Jewish homeland.”

U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley was sharply critical of the Security Council’s failure to respond.

“Disgusting anti-Semitic statements from the Palestinian leadership obviously undermine the prospects for Middle East peace,” she said in a statement. “When the Security Council cannot reach consensus on denouncing such actions, it only further undermines the U.N.’s credibility in addressing this critical issue.”

The proposed statement, obtained by The Associated Press, would have expressed the Security Council’s “firm and unequivocal rejection of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial” and called on Abbas “to refrain from anti-Semitic comments.”

The draft would also have recalled “that anti-Semitism has historically contributed to threats to international peace and security, mass atrocities, and widespread violations of human rights.”

The U.S. circulated the statement Friday as several thousand Palestinians staged a sixth weekly protest on the Gaza-Israel border.

The protests every Friday are part of a campaign organized by Gaza’s Hamas rulers aimed, in part, at breaking a decade-old blockade of the territory that imposed by Israel and Egypt after the Islamic militant group took control there in 2007, and at 70 years of Israeli occupation of land the Palestinians want as their state.

Since late March, 40 Palestinians have been killed and more than 1,700 wounded by Israeli army fire.

Last week, Haley accused Hamas of using women and children as human shields but made no mention of deaths or injuries to Palestinians by the Israeli military.

Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian ambassador to the U.N., said in a letter to the Security Council and Secretary-General Antonio Guterres late Friday that more casualties in the latest protests reinforce the “sense of despair and anger” in the face of what he called “this ruthless occupation.”

“As tensions continue to rise and humanitarian and security conditions to deteriorate, the urgency of addressing this dire situation and bringing it back from the brink thus cannot be understated,” he said. “Time is of the essence and the international community must act without delay.”