Arab League forms committee to foil Israeli bid for UNSC membership

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The Arab League on Sunday agreed to a request from the Palestinian Authority to form a committee aimed at stymieing Israel’s bid to becoming a member of the United Nations Security Council, a Palestinian official said.

Israel has said it will vie for a seat on the 15-member panel for 2019-2020, the first time the Jewish state has tried to win a spot on the UN’s most powerful forum.

Elections for the 2019-2020 seats will be held in the summer of 2018.

Palestinian ambassador to Cairo Jamal al-Shobaki, who is also the representative for the PA in the Arab League, said that five Arab bodies would work together to foil Israel’s bid, according to the PA’s official new site Wafa.

They are: the Presidency of the Arab Summit, the Presidency of the Ministerial Council, the Palestinian Authority, the Secretary General of the Arab League and Egypt, which is currently  the only Arab state member on the UNSC.

Shobaki made these comments on the sidelines of a closed session of the Arab League Council in Cairo.

Israel has been publicly eyeing a seat on the important world body since at least 2013.

Jerusalem is planning to apply for one of two spots allocated to the Western European and Other Group (WEOG), to which it was admitted in 2000.

### Fight over African votes

A key battle will be in Africa, where Israel has been deepening its ties in recent years. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has visited Africa twice over the last year, making strengthening ties with the continent one of his main foreign policy goals. Besides seeking new markets for Israeli agriculture, hi-tech and security know-how, the prime minister was also keen to improve African nations’ voting record on Israel-related matters in international forums, such as the UNSC or the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

“There must be intensive Arab efforts to prevent Israel from obtaining membership in the Security Council and getting the votes of African countries,” Shobaki said.

“Arabs and Africans share historical and cultural relations, and the [African countries] have a major role in supporting the Palestinian cause. The majority…will maintain their historic support,” he added.

Togo, which is a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), is organizing an [Africa-Israel summit](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-dismisses-efforts-to-derail-upcoming-africa-summit/), which is scheduled for October 23-27 in the capital Lome. Togo is set to invite all 54 countries on the continent to the event, but the Palestinians, Morocco and South Africa [are actively seeking to derail the gathering.](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-dismisses-efforts-to-derail-upcoming-africa-summit/)

Shobaki said on Sunday that there is a draft resolution submitted to the Arab League Council both by the Palestinians and Saudi Arabia “in connection” to this planned summit.

In December, [during the first-ever visit to Kazakhstan by a sitting Israeli prime minister](https://www.timesofisrael.com/pm-asks-kazakhstan-to-back-israeli-bid-for-security-council-seat/), Netanyahu asked the Muslim country to support Israel’s bid at the UN.

“My hope is, and I say this to all our friends, that the great partnership that we are building here will also be reflected in international forums like the UN. That’s beginning to happen. The ship doesn’t move overnight; we understand that it’s a big ship. But it’s going to change, it’s changing already,” Netanyahu told Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

He added,“Now, if you want a real change in the world, imagine the State of Israel on the Security Council of the United Nations — that’s a change.”