**Explanation of Vote before Voting on Two Draft UN Security Council Resolutions on Gaza**

June 1, 2018

U.S. Mission to the United Nations

https://usun.state.gov/remarks/8465

AS DELIVERED

Thank you, Mr. President. And I congratulate the Russian Federation on the presidency this month. I want to thank the Polish Mission for everything that they did last month in helping all go smoothly.

And I would like to clarify, before I get started, with my Kuwaiti friend, that they did not take into account everyone’s edits, because we had quite a few. And there were concerns on this Council at the fact that Hamas wasn’t mentioned in the resolution. The resolution offered by Kuwait represents a grossly one-sided view of what has taken place in Gaza in recent weeks. Anyone who cares about the peace process should vote against it. But make no mistake, regardless of how others choose to vote, the United States will oppose this resolution, and we will veto it if we must.

The terrorist group Hamas bears primary responsibility for the awful living conditions in Gaza. It is Hamas that has served as the de facto government of Gaza for the last eleven years. It is Hamas that has consistently diverted humanitarian assistance into military infrastructure, building rockets instead of schools, producing terror tunnels instead of hospitals. It is Hamas that has attacked the very humanitarian access points into Gaza that are lifelines for the Palestinian people. It is Hamas and its allies that fired rockets – at least seventy of them this week alone – indiscriminately into Israeli communities. It is Hamas that has incited violent acts at the boundary fence, purposely infiltrating its terrorist fighters among civilians, deliberately using innocent people as human shields. It is Hamas that openly calls for the destruction of the state of Israel. It is Hamas that refuses to cooperate with the Palestinian Authority to unite in the pursuit of peace.

And yet, Kuwait’s resolution makes no mention of Hamas. None at all. Instead, the resolution places all the blame on Israel. Kuwait actually blames Israel for Hamas firing rockets onto a kindergarten playground in Israel. It conveniently ignores the fact that there is not one single Israeli settlement or soldier in Gaza. There have not been any since 2005. It ignores the fact that according to Hamas officials themselves, the majority of those killed by Israeli defense forces in recent weeks were members of the Hamas terrorist group, not peaceful civilians. And finally, this resolution perpetuates the bias toward Israel that has long been the hallmark of the United Nations.

It is resolutions like this one that undermine the UN’s credibility in dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Because this resolution is wildly inaccurate in its characterization of recent events in Gaza, and because it would harm any efforts towards peace, the United States will oppose it and will veto it if necessary.

But there is an alternative. For those who are able to bring themselves to recognize the reality that Hamas terrorism is a considerable factor in the recent unrest and for the terrible conditions in Gaza, we are offering a separate resolution. This resolution rightly places responsibility where it belongs. It contains many features that Kuwait’s resolution lacks. It condemns Hamas’s indiscriminate firing of rockets against Israeli civilian communities. It condemns Hamas’s diversion of resources into military infrastructure. It demands that Hamas stop its deliberate efforts to put Palestinian civilians at risk at the boundary fence.

By offering this resolution, we are giving members of the Security Council additional options. You can choose to vote to condemn the terrorists who are responsible for inciting violence in Gaza, and against condemning a country for acting in self-defense just as any of us would do. You can choose to cast your votes in ways that condemn both parties, or neither party. Finally, you can make the choice to vote for the Kuwait resolution and against the American resolution. In doing that, you would make it clear that you believe all responsibility lies with Israel and none lies with the Hamas terrorist group.

The situation in Gaza is truly tragic. No one should have to live in such conditions. The United States remains fully determined to pursue a long-term peace agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Such an agreement would benefit the entire Middle East region and most especially the Palestinian and Israeli people. But a necessary precondition for peace is recognition of reality. One of those realities is that Hamas is a major impediment to peace. They are in charge of Gaza, and they use their resources not to help the people of Gaza but to wage war against Israel.

Another reality is when the United Nations sides with terrorists over Israel, as the Kuwait resolution does, it only makes a peaceful resolution of this conflict harder to reach. We strongly encourage this Council to vote against Kuwait’s resolution and acknowledge the concerns of Hamas by voting for the U.S. resolution. Each of you has a choice. You either support Hamas or not. This vote will tell the story.

Thank you.