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# Palestinians Resist Appeals to Halt U.N. Statehood Bid

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/16/world/middleeast/palestinians-resist-appeals-t...> [1]

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JERUSALEM ? Senior American and European diplomats tried without success on Thursday to persuade the Palestinian leaders to skip or modify their planned United Nations membership bid, officials involved said.

Riad Malki, the Palestinian foreign minister, told foreign journalists in Ramallah that the Palestinians would continue to listen to suggestions but that barring something very persuasive, President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority would submit a full membership application to the United Nations Security Council next Friday.

Another Palestinian official said that Mr. Abbas told Dennis B. Ross, a top American diplomat: ?We appreciate the American role, but you are too late. We have reached the moment of truth, and we are going to the Security Council.?

The United States has said it will use its veto there because it believes that the only way to Palestinian statehood is through direct negotiations with Israel.

?There was one suggestion that Palestine would be given some of the attributes of a state so that it could get funding from the World Bank, for example, but would not now seek membership in the U.N.,? the Palestinian official said, speaking anonymously in accordance with diplomatic protocol. ?Another was for a resumption of negotiations based on the 1967 lines, but it didn?t include an Israeli settlement freeze. We rejected both ideas.?

There is still some discussion, however, of skipping the Security Council and going directly to the General Assembly, where there is no veto and where a majority is guaranteed. In that

case, the Palestinians would be granted the status of a nonmember state while sparing the United States the damage to its standing in the Arab world that it would suffer from using its Council veto.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Thursday in San Francisco that the administration remained "absolutely committed" to finding a compromise to avert a confrontation at the United Nations based on a resumption of negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians along the lines outlined by President Obama in May.

Major concerns "will not be resolved if another route is taken," she said.

Several European countries have been working with the Palestinians on a resolution for the General Assembly. The wording would try to limit the immediate impact of a Palestinian state. Another suggestion is for the General Assembly to endorse the idea of a state without granting it any changed status.

The public Palestinian position is to reject this and insist on going to the Council. Some diplomats here believe that position is posturing and could shift by the end of next week. Others say the Palestinians mean what they say.

One reason for the Palestinians to go to the General Assembly is that in the Security Council the United States could not only veto but also delay the proceedings. Once the request is submitted, a committee of all member states is formed and the American delegate could ask for weeks of study.

A second reason is the symbolism of the moment.

"Remember that part of what is going on is about the legacy of Abbas, who plans to retire, and acceptance in the General Assembly rather than a showdown with the United States would serve that end," said a senior Israeli official who is involved in some of the discussions suggested.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel said he would address the General Assembly next Friday, the same day that Mr. Abbas is expected to make his application.

"The General Assembly is not a place where Israel usually receives a fair hearing," Mr. Netanyahu said. "But I still decided to tell the truth before anyone who would like to hear it."

Mr. Netanyahu said he wanted direct talks without preconditions, and he said the fact that the Palestinians insisted on a settlement freeze was evidence that they were not serious about talks.

Israeli officials say they are considering a range of punitive measures toward the Palestinians if they carry out their plan at the United Nations, because it amounts to a unilateral step that breaks the framework of their negotiating relationship. The Palestinians say United Nations membership is not intended as a substitute for talks.

In Egypt, Prime Minister Essam Sharaf said that his country's peace treaty with Israel was "not sacred" and was always open to discussion or change if that would benefit either peace or the region.

Since the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak in February, Egypt's relations with Israel

have been strained, with frequent public calls in Egypt for an end to their three-decade peace treaty. The ruling military council has repeatedly said that it will uphold the treaty but that it is open to renegotiating parts of it.

Steven Lee Myers contributed reporting from San Francisco.

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