

U.S. vows to block new attempt by Palestine for full UN membership

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Riyad Mansour, the permanent observer of Palestine to the United Nations (AFP file photo)

Washington, April 3 (RHC)-- The United States has vowed to block a new attempt by the Palestinians for full membership in the United Nations. Supporters of the Palestinian move asked the UN Security Council on Tuesday to revive an application for admission submitted in 2011.

But Robert Wood, the U.S. deputy ambassador to the UN, was again almost certain to block the request. "Our position has not changed," Wood told several reporters. Wood said the issue of a full Palestinian membership is one of the final status issues to be decided in bilateral talks between the Palestinians and Israel.

At least 140 countries have recognized a Palestinian state. They include members of the 22-nation Arab Group at the United Nations, the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the 120-member Nonaligned Movement.

Malta's UN Ambassador Vanessa Frazier, who is the current president of the Security Council, said the Council's standing committee for new members, which includes all the 15 members, is expected to meet behind closed doors to consider the application.

The monthly Security Council meeting on April 18th will also consider the issue of Palestine's full membership.

After the initial bid for full UN membership was rejected in 2011, the Palestinians went to the 193-member UN General Assembly, where there are no vetoes. They succeeded by more than a two-thirds majority in having their status raised from a UN observer to a non-member observer state in November 2012.

That change opened the door for the Palestinian territories to join the UN and other international organizations, including the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Riyad Mansour, the permanent observer of Palestine to the United Nations, has repeatedly said in recent months that in the face of Israel's brutal campaign of death and destruction in the besieged Gaza Strip, UN membership is a priority for the Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has long ruled out Palestinian statehood.

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