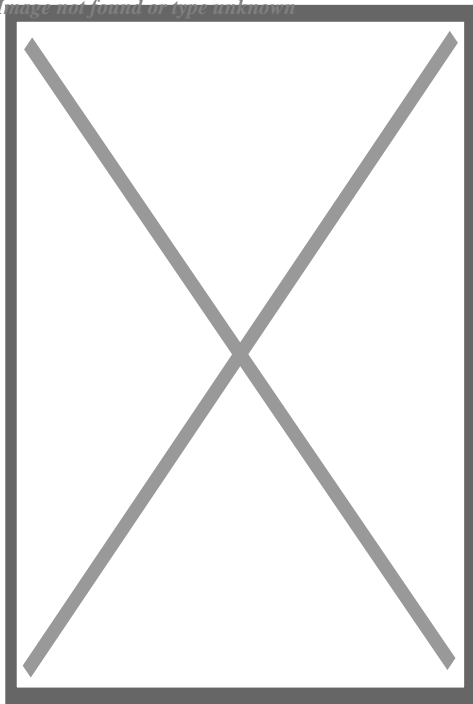


UN Security Council refers Palestine's full membership bid to committee

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United Nations, April 8 (RHC)-- The United Nations Security Council president has referred the Palestinian Authority's (PA's) application for Palestine to become a full member of the world body to its membership committee. The 15-member committee is expected to make a decision about Palestine's status this month, said Vanessa Frazier, Malta's UN ambassador, who also proposed that the committee meet on Monday to consider the application. Malta is president of the Security Council for April.

Palestinian UN envoy Riyad Mansour told reporters in New York that the PA sincerely hoped that after 12 years as an observer state at the UN, the Security Council would "elevate itself to implementing the global consensus on the two-state solution by admitting the state of Palestine for full membership."

Last week, the PA formally asked for renewed consideration by the Security Council of its 2011 application to become a full member of the world body. The Palestinians are a non-member observer state at the UN, the same status as the Holy See.

Reporting from UN headquarters in New York, Al Jazeera's Gabriel Elizondo said the PA's membership bid was "moving forward" and highlighted that this is a significant and symbolic moment for Palestine.

"This is only the second time that Palestine has been able to get this far in their bid for full UN membership. The last time was 2011 when it essentially failed in the Security Council standing committee due to a threat by the U.S. to veto it if it ever came to a vote," he noted.

He added that for any country to become a full member of the UN, the international body's charter says the country's membership first has to be approved by the Security Council and then it would need to get the support of two-thirds of the 190 members of the UN General Assembly.

"It is believed that Palestine has the support in the General Assembly. That is pretty much widely accepted. The issue is in the Security Council, ... where any of the five permanent members could veto it, and this would then stop the process," Elizondo said.

Security Council approval requires at least nine votes in favour and no vetoes by the United States, Russia, China, France or Britain.

Earlier on Monday, the Security Council met behind closed doors to discuss the letter from the PA.

Mansour told Reuters last week that the aim was for the council to make a decision at an April 18 ministerial meeting on the Middle East. Israel's UN ambassador, Gilad Erdan, said recognition of a Palestinian state would be a threat to Israel's national security.

"Granting the Palestinian statehood is not only a blatant violation of the UN Charter, it also violates the fundamental principle that everyone can understand of reaching a solution, a lasting solution, at the negotiating table," Erdan told reporters on Monday. "The UN has been sabotaging peace in the Middle East for years, but today marks the beginning of the point of no return," he said.

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