

Washington Opposes UN Resolution on Syria's Israeli-occupied Golan

US envoy Nikki Haley says resolution calling for Israel to rescind authority in occupied Golan 'useless'

By [Middle East Eye](#)

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The United States opposed on Friday for the first time an annual draft resolution at the United Nations calling on Israel to rescind its authority in the occupied Golan Heights, drawing praise from Israeli officials.

The Golan Heights, Syrian territory illegally occupied and subsequently annexed by Israel, forms a strategic plateau between Israel and Syria of about 1,200 square km.

It was part of Syria until Israel captured it in the 1967 Middle East War. Israel moved settlers into the area and annexed the territory in 1981 in a move not recognised internationally.

The United States has abstained in previous years on the "Occupied Syrian Golan" resolution, which declares Israel's decision to impose its jurisdiction in the area "null and void," but US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said on Thursday that Washington would vote against the resolution.

"The United States will no longer abstain when the United Nations engages in its useless annual vote on the Golan Heights," Haley, who will be leaving her post by the end of the year, said in a statement.

"The resolution is plainly biased against Israel. Further, the atrocities the Syrian regime continues to commit prove its lack of fitness to govern anyone," her statement said.

Despite the US opposition, a UN General Assembly committee approved the draft resolution on Friday with 151 votes in favour and 14 abstentions. Only Israel joined the United States in voting no. The General Assembly is due to formally adopt the resolution next month.

The US ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, said in September he expects Israel to keep the Golan Heights in perpetuity.

Since early in Donald Trump's presidency, Israel has lobbied for formal US endorsement of its control of the Golan.

Trump has recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital, breaking with other world powers, though his national security adviser, John Bolton, told Reuters in August that a similar Golan move was not under discussion.

Israel has repeatedly bombed military targets in Syria since the start of the civil war in 2011. Damascus also has accused the Israeli government of harbouring and supporting hardline rebels, whom it labels as terrorists, near the Golan Heights.

In the late 2000s, secret talks began between Syria and Israel that reportedly included the possibility Israel would return the area to Syria in exchange for a peace deal.

Negotiations collapsed when Israel launched its war in Gaza in 2009.

Hundreds of thousands of Syrians fled the Golan into other parts of Syria in the aftermath of the 1967 war. The population of the region is now a mix of Syrian Arabs and Israeli settlers.

Until 2012, the vast majority of Golan Syrians – who are mostly Druze – refused offers of Israeli citizenship. However, the Syrian civil war has led to many applying for citizenship.

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