

# [***Russia and China veto US resolution calling for immediate cease-fire in Gaza***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BM2-Y651-JC5B-G3SV-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Associated Press

March 22, 2024 Friday 11:20 PM GMT

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**Section:** INTERNATIONAL NEWS

**Length:** 1228 words

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**Dateline:** UNITED NATIONS

**Body**

UNITED NATIONS — Russia and China on Friday vetoed a U.S.-sponsored United Nations resolution supporting “an immediate and sustained cease-fire” in the [*Israel-Hamas war*](https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war) in Gaza, calling the measure ambiguous and saying it was not the direct demand to end the fighting that much of the world seeks.

The vote in the Security Council became another showdown involving world powers that are locked in tense disputes elsewhere, with the United States taking criticism for not being tough enough against its ally Israel, whose ongoing military offensive has created a dire humanitarian crisis for the 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza.

A key issue was the unusual language that said the Security Council “determines the imperative of an immediate and sustained cease-fire.” The phrasing was not a straightforward “demand” or “call” to halt hostilities.

The resolution reflected a shift by the United States, which has found itself at odds with much of the world as even allies of Israel push for an unconditional end to fighting.

In previous resolutions, the U.S. has closely intertwined calls for a cease-fire with demands for the release of Israeli hostages in Gaza. This resolution, using wording that’s open to interpretation, continued to link the two issues, but not as firmly.

Before the vote, Russian U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said Moscow supports an immediate cease-fire, but he criticized the diluted language, which he called philosophical wording that does not belong in a U.N. resolution.

He accused U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield of “deliberately misleading the international community.”

“This was some kind of an empty rhetorical exercise,” Nebenzia said. “The American product is exceedingly politicized, the sole purpose of which is to help to play to the voters, to throw them a bone in the form of some kind of a mention of a cease-fire in Gaza \u2026 and to ensure the impunity of Israel, whose crimes in the draft are not even assessed.”

China’s U.N. ambassador, Zhang Jun, said the U.S. proposal set preconditions and fell far short of expectations of council members and the broader international community.

“If the U.S. was serious about a cease-fire, it wouldn’t have vetoed time and again multiple council resolutions,” he said. “It wouldn’t have taken such a detour and played a game of words while being ambiguous and evasive on critical issues.”

The U.S. has vetoed three resolutions demanding a cease-fire, the most recent an [*Arab-backed measure supported by 13 council members*](https://apnews.com/article/un-israel-palestinians-gaza-ceasefire-resolution-vote-350c86ef261bf1a00a2515cf22764de5) with one abstention on Feb. 20.

Thomas-Greenfield urged the council to adopt the resolution to press for an immediate cease-fire and the release of the hostages, as well as to address Gaza's humanitarian crisis and support ongoing diplomacy by the United States, Egypt and Qatar.

The vote in the 15-member council was 11 members in favor and three against, including Algeria, the Arab representative on the council. There was one abstention, from Guyana.

After the vote, Thomas-Greenfield accused Russia and China of voting for “deeply cynical reasons," saying they could not bring themselves to condemn Hamas’ terrorist attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7, which the resolution would have done for the first time.

She accused Russia of again putting “***politics*** over progress” and having “the audacity and hypocrisy to throw stones” after launching its unwarranted invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

At the White House, national security spokesman John Kirby said Russia and China would “rather shoot down something we authored simply because we authored it.”

While the most recent resolution would have been officially binding under international law, it would not have ended the fighting or led to the release of hostages. But it would have added to the pressure on Israel amid global demands for a cease-fire at a time of rising tensions between the U.S. and Israeli governments.

Meanwhile, the 10 elected members of the Security Council have put their own resolution in a final form. It demands an immediate humanitarian cease-fire for the [*Muslim holy month of Ramadan*](https://apnews.com/article/ramadan-muslims-fasting-prayer-photos-83ead097a3b0921f387bb70ad2b6b3fc) that began March 10 to be “respected by all parties leading to a permanent sustainable cease-fire.” The Palestinian U.N. ambassador said the vote would take place Saturday morning.

The resolution also demands “the immediate and unconditional [*release of all hostages*](https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-hostage-families-ceasefire-ramadan-d1b0da2f7bd2e9882f79ebae874561be) ” and emphasizes the urgent need to protect civilians and deliver humanitarian aid throughout the Gaza Strip.

The Russian, Chinese and Algerian ambassadors urged council members to support it, but Thomas-Greenfield said the text's current form "fails to support sensitive diplomacy in the region. Worse, it could actually give Hamas an excuse to walk away from the deal on the table.”

The [*Security Council*](https://apnews.com/hub/united-nations-security-council) had already adopted two resolutions on the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, but none has called for a cease-fire.

Russia and China vetoed a U.S.-sponsored resolution in late October calling for pauses in the fighting to deliver aid, protection of civilians and a halt to arming Hamas. They said it did not reflect global calls for a cease-fire.

A day earlier, the U.S. circulated a rival resolution, which went through major changes during negotiations before Friday’s vote. It initially would have supported a temporary cease-fire linked to the release of all hostages, and the previous draft would have supported international efforts for a cease-fire as part of a hostage deal.

The vote took place as Blinken, America’s top diplomat, was on his [*sixth mission to the Middle East*](https://apnews.com/article/saudi-arabia-egypt-israel-gaza-hamas-blinken-7e4d53b15a6c86979faaeae035564e58) since the war began, discussing a deal for a cease-fire and hostage release, as well as post-war scenarios.

Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people in the surprise Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel that triggered the war, and they abducted another 250 people. Hamas is still believed to be holding some 100 people hostage, as well as the remains of 30 others.

In Gaza, the Health Ministry raised the death toll in the territory Thursday to nearly 32,000 Palestinians. The agency [*does not differentiate*](https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-gaza-health-ministry-health-death-toll-59470820308b31f1faf73c703400b033) between civilians and combatants in its count but says [*women and children*](https://apnews.com/article/women-children-gaza-war-victims-un-inequality-f0f89a724543b99c2c22439e7af09405) make up two-thirds of the dead.

A report from an international authority on hunger warned this week that [*“famine is imminent” in northern Gaza*](https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-news-03-18-2024-eefc526aec97821fe5f1e845801a6640) and that escalation of the war could push half of the territory's population to the brink of starvation.

[*Israel faces mounting pressure*](https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-news-03-06-2024-3e4bc85bc4e184312763fc331fbffedb) to streamline the entry of aid into the Gaza Strip, to open more land crossings and to come to a cease-fire agreement. But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to move the [*military offensive to the southern city of Rafah*](https://apnews.com/article/rafah-hamas-gaza-israel-war-541e91c0f09196944a4dabeded94596f), where some 1.3 million displaced Palestinians have sought safety. Netanyahu says it’s a Hamas stronghold.

The final U.S. resolution eliminated language in the initial draft that said Israel’s offensive in Rafah “should not proceed under current circumstances.” Instead, in an introductory paragraph, the council emphasized its concern that a ground offensive into Rafah “would result in further harm to civilians and their further displacement, potentially into neighboring countries, and would have serious implications for regional peace and security.”

China's Zhang criticized the backtracking on unequivocal U.S. opposition, saying it “would send an utterly wrong signal and lead to severe consequences."

**Load-Date:** March 22, 2024

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