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## Palestinians Inch Closer to Rejection at U.N. Body

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The Palestinian bid for membership at the United Nations, which was doomed from the start by the threat of an American veto, moved another notch closer to rejection on Thursday at the Security Council, diplomats said.

The Council's membership committee met in private, with member states laying out their individual positions on the Palestinians' request, said diplomats, who spoke on the condition of anonymity under diplomatic protocol. The membership committee is trying to produce a report by Tuesday, and indications are that the group will be unable to reach a consensus.

The report is likely to be a dry, diplomatic document that says some committee members support the Palestinian's bid and others oppose it. A vote to forward the report to the General Assembly will probably take place on Nov. 11, diplomats said.

But a vote on the membership request itself — which was intended by the Palestinians to represent international recognition of statehood — might even be skipped if none of the 15 Security Council members demands one.

It appears unlikely that the Palestinians will be able to muster the nine votes needed to approve the membership resolution, which would allow the United States to avoid having to exercise its veto.

Admission to the United Nations as a full member state requires a recommendation from the 15-member Security Council, with a majority of nine votes and no veto from the five permanent members, which include the United States. A submission would then go to the General Assembly, where approval would require a two-thirds vote among the 193 members.

Some European nations that might have been expected to support the Palestinian bid have since said that they would abstain; these include France and Bosnia, diplomats said. During the committee meeting on Thursday, France indicated that it intended to abstain, according to diplomats.

If the membership bid fails in the Security Council, the General Assembly is expected to take up the matter. Members of the General Assembly cannot veto an initiative, but the body would be able only to confer advanced observer status on the Palestinians, much like the standing now held by the Vatican.

On Monday, Unesco voted overwhelming to accept Palestine as the organization's 194th full member. In doing so, the organization — formally the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization — defied a mandated cutoff of American funds under federal law, which will cost it one-quarter of its annual budget — the 22 percent contributed by the United States (about \$70 million) and the 3 percent contributed by Israel.

After their success at Unesco, the Palestinians are now expected to try to join other United Nations organizations, whatever the outcome of their bid for full membership through the Security Council.

Before the Security Council committee met on Thursday, the United Nations' secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, warned that piecemeal efforts by the Palestinians to join agencies of the world body were "not beneficial for Palestine and not beneficial for anybody."

"This will have implications for all the agencies of the United Nations," he said in an interview with The Associated Press. He said he was concerned that the loss of American financial support would adversely affect "millions and millions of people."

In another development, the Palestinian Authority said Thursday that Israel had carried out a threat to suspend the transfer of tax payments, totaling about \$100 million, to the Palestinians to protest the Palestinians' admission to Unesco, The A.P. reported.

Israel collects customs and some income taxes on behalf of the Palestinians and transfers them monthly to the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Palestinian officials said Israel had

not made this month's transfer, The A.P. reported. The money is usually sent during the first three days of the month.