

Walking the Talk:

2021 Blueprints for a Human Rights-Centered
U.S. Foreign Policy

Chapter 10: Rejoining the U.N. Human Rights
Council while Advancing Real Reform

Acknowledgments

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When confronting American domestic, foreign, and national security policies that undermine respect for universal rights, the staff of Human Rights First focus not on making a point, but on making a difference. For over 40 years we've built bipartisan coalitions and partnered with frontline activists, lawyers, military leaders, and technologists to tackle issues that demand American leadership.

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Rejoining the U.N. Human Rights Council while Advancing Real Reform

Introduction

Defending human rights is not a unilateral endeavor. No country, no matter how powerful and influential, can match the credibility of the international community acting through its shared institutions. And despite its imperfections and the challenges posed by many of its member states, no institution possesses the relevance or global reach of the United Nations—a fact well understood by the generation of U.S. policy-makers who presided over the U.N.’s creation and the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).¹

[T]he decision to unilaterally withdraw from the Council was shortsighted, counterproductive to U.S. interests, and predicated on erroneous assumptions about the Council and the utility of U.S. membership.

Recognizing the U.N.’s essential role in promoting and defending human rights does not, however, mean turning a blind eye to its shortcomings. As a political body, the U.N.’s organs reflect the consensus—or lack thereof—of their member states. As a result, governments that systematically violate the rights of their own

citizens routinely wield significant influence over U.N. activities. The tension between the U.N.’s institutional commitment to human rights, as expressed through its charter and human rights treaties organized under U.N. auspices, and the practices of its members is a perennial obstacle to the body’s ability to act credibly and effectively on human rights issues. This is especially the case for the only U.N. political body exclusively devoted to advancing human rights: the U.N. Human Rights Council (“Council” or “HRC”).

The Trump administration announced its decision to withdraw from the Council in 2018.² Citing the membership of well-known human rights-abusing regimes and the Council’s disproportionate focus on Israel, the administration argued that it could better pursue U.S. foreign policy from outside the body.³

In articulating its public justification, the administration touched on legitimate concerns regarding the Council’s efficacy and perceived legitimacy. However, the decision to unilaterally withdraw from the Council was shortsighted, counterproductive to U.S. interests, and predicated on erroneous assumptions about the Council and the utility of U.S. membership. It will be up to the next administration to reverse this error in judgment and quickly return the United States to the Council.

The protection and promotion of the international human rights framework is undeniably in the U.S. national interest. Overwhelming data demonstrates that governments that respect the fundamental rights of their citizens are more reliable allies, stronger trading partners, and better stewards of regional peace and long-term international stability.⁴ In order to guarantee that the United States plays an integral role in the multilateral effort to improve compliance with the human rights framework, the next administration should rejoin the Council and work from within to secure necessary reforms. It is only through active participation in the international human rights movement that the U.S. can help propel the movement forward and achieve its foreign policy goals.

1 For the United States’ role in the enshrining of human rights principles in the United Nations Charter and the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, see Tony Evans, *U.S. Hegemony and the Project of Universal Human Rights*, pp. 48-70 (1996).

2 Gardiner Harris, *Trump Administration Withdraws U.S. From U.N. Human Rights Council*, New York Times (Jun. 19, 2018) available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/19/us/politics/trump-israel-palestinians-human-rights.html>.

3 Mike Pompeo, U.S. Secretary of State, Nikki Haley, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Remarks to the Press on the U.N. Human Rights Council (Jun. 19, 2018) available at <https://www.state.gov/remarks-on-the-un-human-rights-council/>.

4 Democracy & Human Rights Working Group, McCain Institute for International Leadership, *Advancing Freedom Promotes U.S. Interests*, at p. 2 (Sep. 2016) available at <https://www.mccainstitute.org/advancing-freedom-promotes-us-interests/>; see also Michael Fuchs, Center for American Progress, *How to Support Democracy and Human Rights in Asia* (Sep. 16, 2019) available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2019/09/16/474577/support-democracy-human-rights-asia/>; see also Executive Order Executive Order 13,818, Blocking the Property of Persons Involved in Serious Human Rights Abuse or Corruption, 82 Fed. Reg. 60839 (2017) available at <https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/eo-13818-glomag.pdf> (finding that “[h]uman rights abuse and corruption undermine the values that form an essential foundation of stable, secure, and functioning societies; have devastating impacts on individuals; weaken democratic institutions; degrade the rule of law; perpetuate violent conflicts; facilitate the activities of dangerous persons; and undermine economic markets.”).

Why U.S. Leadership Matters at the Council

To understand the need for U.S. leadership on the Council, it's important to first recognize the unique and complex role that the HRC plays in the global human rights movement. The U.N. General Assembly established the Human Rights Council in 2006 with the mandate to “promot[e] universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all,” and to “address situations of violations of human rights.”⁵ The body is composed of 47 members, and its seats are allocated by geographic region.

The Council engages in numerous lines of work aimed at the realization of its mandate, including a rolling review of the human rights records of every General Assembly member, known as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the commissioning of independent investigations into human rights situations, and the debate and passage of thematic and country-specific resolutions on human rights issues. The Council also provides an important forum for civil society, and is widely regarded as the body “most open and accessible in the U.N. structure” to non-governmental organizations.⁶

Since its creation, the Council has faced criticism concerning its credibility and efficacy. One recurring source of criticism is the Council's composition. Since its creation, the body has consistently included governments with well-documented histories of human rights abuse, including Eritrea, Venezuela, the Philippines, Burundi, Egypt, Cuba, China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia.⁷ Another perennial source of criticism is the Council's history of ignoring or failing to appropriately grapple with serious human rights situations, while placing disproportionate focus on others. The Council has yet to authorize an inquiry or report relating to well-documented cases of human rights abuses in Egypt and Bahrain, for example. By contrast, the situation in the Israeli-occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank is the only permanent item on the Council's agenda—meaning that the matter must be discussed at every Council session.⁸ Between 2006 and 2016, Israel was the subject of more condemnatory resolutions than any other country.⁹ While focus on violations of human rights relating to the Israel-Palestine conflict is appropriate to the Council's mandate, such concerted, inordinate attention is not.

5 G. A. Res. 60/251, at ¶ 1 (Apr. 3, 2006) available at https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/A.RES.60.251_En.pdf.

6 *Assessing the United Nations Human Rights Council: Testimony prepared for the Subcomm. on Multilateral International Development, Multilateral Institutions, and International Economic, Energy & Environmental Policy of the S. Comm. On Foreign Relations*, 115th Cong., p. 3 (May 25, 2017) available at https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/052517_Piccone_Testimony.pdf.

7 U.N. General Assembly, *Election and Appointments*, available at <https://www.un.org/en/ga/74/meetings/elections/hrc.shtml>.

8 Patrick Wintour, *UK will change tack on UN motions criticizing Israel, says Jeremy Hunt*, *Guardian* (Mar. 21, 2019) available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/21/uk-will-change-tack-on-un-motions-criticising-israel-says-jeremy-hunt>.

9 Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, *Game-Changer: the U.S. at the UN Human Rights Council*, p. 3 (May 2017) available at <https://www.jbi-humanrights.org/files/jbi-briefing-paper---game-changer---us-on-unhrc-1.pdf>.

These various criticisms, as well as the Council’s supposed infringement on U.S. sovereignty, formed the basis of the Trump administration’s rationale for withdrawing from the Council. In a June 2018 speech justifying the administration’s decision, then-U.S. Permanent Representative to the U.N., Nikki Haley, called the Council a “protector of human rights abusers and a cesspool of bias” that “makes a mockery of human rights.”¹⁰ Since the U.S. withdrawal, the Trump administration has doubled down on its criticism of the Council. In response to the body’s decision to order a report on “systemic racism” against people of African descent—a vote that was taken shortly after George Floyd’s murder—Secretary of State Mike Pompeo referred to the Council as “a haven for dictators and democracies that indulge them” and suggested that the resolution “reaffirmed the wisdom of [the administration’s] decision to withdraw in 2018.”¹¹

Taken at face value, the Trump administration’s decision to withdraw was based on two conclusions, neither of which withstand scrutiny. The first of these is that, in aggregate, the Council does more to harm the cause of human rights than to advance them. The second conclusion is that U.S. participation in Council activities legitimizes a deeply flawed institution, a concern that overrides any potential benefit from U.S. engagement.

Contrary to the Trump administration’s assertions, the Council plays an important role in multilateral efforts to protect human rights and, since 2006, has made significant improvements in identifying and addressing serious human rights situations in a timely manner. In recent years, the Council has requested investigations or reports on grave violations in over two dozen countries, including North Korea, Cambodia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Burundi, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Sudan, Iran, Yemen, Libya, and Venezuela.¹² In the case of North Korea, the findings of a Commission of Inquiry appointed by the Council were sufficiently powerful to persuade the Security Council to convene a series of annual sessions on the topic.¹³

The Council has likewise passed resolutions advancing rights in key thematic areas, such as resolution 32/2 of June 2016, which established an international expert on violence and discrimination based on sexual

orientation and gender identity.¹⁴ “Special procedures”—independent human rights experts serving under Council mandate—have likewise undertaken vital human rights-related investigations, such as the 2019 report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, who found the Saudi Arabian government responsible for the October 2018 murder of Saudi Arabian journalist and dissident Jamal Khashoggi.¹⁵ Other special rapporteurs on freedom of association and peaceful assembly,

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freedom of expression, and freedom of religion or belief have helped to advance international thinking and norm-setting on key thematic issues.

Furthermore, while it is true that some countries seek membership in the Council to shield themselves and others from scrutiny, the ability of these states to prevent the Council from documenting and condemning

10 Pompeo, *supra* note 3.

11 Michael Pompeo, U.S. Secretary of State, *Press Statement: On the Hypocrisy of UN Human Rights Council* (Jun. 20, 2020) available at <https://www.state.gov/on-the-hypocrisy-of-un-human-rights-council/>.

12 U.N. Human Rights Council, *List of HRC-mandated Commissions of Inquiries / Fact-Finding Missions & Other Bodies* (last updated Oct. 2019) available at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/ListHRCMandat.aspx>; Mark P. Lagon, Ryan Kaminski, International Institutions and Global Governance Program, Council on Foreign Relations, *Bolstering the UN Human Rights Council’s Effectiveness*, p. 5 (Jan. 2017) available at https://www.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/12/Discussion_Paper_Lagon_Kaminski_UNHRC_OR.pdf.

13 *US scraps UN meeting on North Korea human rights*, Channel News Asia (Dec. 8, 2018) available at <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/us-scraps-un-meeting-on-north-korea-human-rights-11012546>.

14 Human Rights Council Res. 32/2, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/RES/32/2, (Jul. 15, 2016) available at https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/RES/32/2.

15 Dr. Agnes Callemard (Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions), *Investigation of, accountability for and prevention of intentional State killings of human rights defenders, journalists and prominent dissidents*, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/41/36 (Oct. 4, 2019) available at https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session41/Documents/A_HRC_41_36.docx.

violations is often limited. Burundi's presence on the Council, for example, did not impede the body from establishing an independent commission of inquiry into abuses in the country.¹⁶ Likewise, the Philippines' election to the Council in 2018 did not thwart the passage of a resolution addressing drug war killings in the country and directing a comprehensive report on the matter, despite an aggressive campaign from Manila (with the strong support of Beijing) to quash the initiative.¹⁷ Finally, Venezuela's presence on the Council since 2017 did not prevent the Council from requesting that the High Commissioner prepare a hard-hitting report on violations committed by the Maduro government.¹⁸

Further undermining the Trump administration's decision to withdraw, considerable evidence demon-

[C]onsiderable evidence demonstrates that U.S. presence on the Council resulted in an increase in scrutiny of serious human rights situations and improved the overall quality of the Council's adopted resolutions.

strates that U.S. presence on the Council resulted in an increase in scrutiny of serious human rights situations and improved the overall quality of the Council's adopted resolutions.¹⁹ During its period of engagement, American diplomatic leadership contributed to an increase in the number of independent human rights experts reporting to the Council on topics of interest to human rights advocates, as well as the establishment of numerous fact-finding and monitoring missions. The United States also

helped end the passage of resolutions condoning punishments for blasphemy and circumscribing freedom of expression,²⁰ and helped secure resolutions calling for the protection of human rights defenders.²¹ Finally, U.S. engagement helped keep serial human rights violators Iran, Syria, and Russia—which reliably held a seat on the Council and its predecessor body for decades—off the body in 2010, 2011, and 2016, respectively.²²

The absence of American leadership has also made it easier for some of the world's worst human rights offenders to obtain a seat on the Council. Before the United States' withdrawal in 2018, none of the world's nine worst human rights offenders, as ranked by the NGO Freedom House, had ever served on the body.²³ In the elections that have occurred since, four such governments—Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, and Libya—have been elected, along with a number of others that routinely engage in significant abuses, such as Venezuela, the Philippines, and Cameroon.

In line with this data, an American return to the Council is likely to help mitigate the body's disproportionate focus on Israel. By compelling the Council to focus on a broad range of human rights concerns, U.S. membership on the Council necessarily reduces the body's focus on Israel. According to the American Jewish Committee's Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, "[t]he number of Israel-specific resolutions adopted by the Council declined during the period of US membership, both

16 U.N. Human Rights Council, *Commission of Inquiry on Burundi*, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/coiburundi/pages/coiburundi.aspx>.

17 Human Rights Council Res. 41/2, U.N. Doc A/HRC/RES/41/2 (Jul. 17, 2019) available at <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/41/2>; *Philippines drugs war: UN votes to investigate killings*, BBC (Jul. 11, 2019) available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48955153>.

18 U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *UN Human Rights report on Venezuela urges immediate measures to halt and remedy grave rights violations* (Jul. 4, 2019) available at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24788&LangID=E>.

19 *Game-Changer*, *supra* note 9, at p. 3.

20 Human Rights First, *U.N. General Assembly Abandons Dangerous "Defamation of Religion" Concept* (Dec. 19, 2011) available at <https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/press-release/un-general-assembly-abandons-dangerous-%E2%80%9Cdefamation-religion%E2%80%9D-concept>.

21 Human Rights Council Res. 25/18, U.N. A/HRC/RES/25/18 (Apr. 11, 2014) available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/134/52/PDF/G1413452.pdf?OpenElement>.

22 See Mark Leon Goldberg, *The Relationship Between Iran and the Human Rights Council is Extremely Contentious*, UN Dispatch (Feb. 28, 2018) available at <https://www.undispatch.com/relationship-iran-human-rights-council-extremely-contentious/>; see also *Syria 'drops bid' to join UN human rights body*, France 24 (Nov. 5, 2011) available at <https://www.france24.com/en/20110511-syria-drops-bid-candidate-seat-un-united-nations-human-rights-council-araud>; see also Julian Borger, *Russia denied membership of UN human rights council*, The Guardian (Oct. 28, 2016) available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/28/russia-denied-membership-of-un-human-rights-council>.

23 Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, *The Impact of US Engagement on the UN Human Rights Council's Country-Specific Scrutiny* (Mar. 31, 2017) available at <https://www.jbi-humanrights.org/jacob-blaustein-institute/2017/03/the-impact-of-us-engagement-on-the-un-human-rights-councils-country-specific-scrutiny.html>; *Game-Changer*, *supra* note 9.

in absolute terms and as a percentage of all country-specific resolutions.”²⁴ In fact, during the March 2018 session, the State Department itself reported that the Council saw “the largest shift in votes toward more abstentions and no votes on Israel related resolutions since the creation of the [Council].”²⁵

Finally, U.S. absence from the Council and the U.N. system more broadly has made it easier for repressive governments to reshape global engagement and discourse on human rights. China, in particular, has engaged in a systemic effort to weaken U.N. human rights mechanisms, suppress discussion of specific human rights violations in the Council, and silence human rights victims and activists.²⁶ China has also sought to shift the international human rights agenda away from the protection of individual rights toward subjects such as economic development and state sovereignty.²⁷ As the Chinese government has clearly recognized, American disengagement simply cedes fertile diplomatic ground to authoritarian regimes.

China’s increased influence over the Council was on full display during the body’s debate over the recently passed Hong Kong National Security Law. In response to China’s enactment of the draconian law that eviscerated civil and political rights in Hong Kong, the Council issued two competing statements.²⁸ Relying on like-minded authoritarian states and smaller states over which China has significant economic influence, the Chinese delegation apparently convinced 53 states to vote in favor of a Cuba-led statement endorsing the Security Law.²⁹ In contrast, only 27 Council members voted in favor of the United Kingdom-led statement condemning China’s actions.³⁰ Of the 53 states that expressed their support for the law, 50 are identified by Freedom House as “not free” or “partially free.”³¹ The three “free” countries that backed Cuba’s statement were Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and Suriname, all of which have accepted assistance from China’s Belt and Road infrastructure program.³²



²⁴ *Game-Changer*, *supra* note 9, at p. 4.

²⁵ U.S. Department of State, Fact Sheet: Key Outcomes of U.S. Priorities at the U.N. Human Rights Council’s 37th Session (Mar. 23, 2018) available at <https://translations.state.gov/2018/03/23/key-outcomes-of-u-s-priorities-at-the-un-human-rights-councils-37th-session/>; *Game-Changer*, *supra* note 9, at p. 4.

²⁶ Kristine Lee, Alexander Sullivan, Center for a New American Security, *People’s Republic of the United Nations: China Emerging Revisionism in International Organizations* (May 2014) available at <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/peoples-republic-of-the-united-nations>.

²⁷ Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations, *Human Rights Council Adopts China-Proposed Resolution* (Jun. 28, 2017) available at http://www.china-un.ch/eng/dbtyw/rqrd_1/speech/t1473894.htm.

²⁸ Dave Lawler, *The 53 Countries Supporting China’s Crackdown on Hong Kong*, *Axios* (Jul. 3, 2020) available at <https://www.axios.com/countries-supporting-china-hong-kong-law-0ec9bc6c-3aeb-4af0-8031-aa0f01a46a7c.html>.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.*

Recommendations

✓ Rejoin the Human Rights Council and prioritize securing reforms

U.S. interests in defending and promoting human rights will not be advanced by a continued absence from the HRC. For all of its flaws, the Council remains a powerful tool for exposing and mobilizing international action on human rights violations. The presence of bad-faith actors who wish to undermine the body's work is not a compelling basis for U.S. absence. Rather, this very presence justifies robust reengagement, and demands American leadership aimed at amplifying the voices of those who want to see the Council succeed, while limiting the influence of those who do not.

In an ideal world, an American return to the Council could be paired with structural reforms to the body's operating procedures that would discourage governments with poor human rights records from seeking and maintaining membership in the body. However, many such beneficial reforms would require amend-

ing General Assembly resolution 60/251, which established the body.³³ Given the General Assembly's make-up, however, such an effort to "re-open" the Council's mandate remains more likely to result in changes that weaken the body than that strengthen it.

This reality does not mean that the United States should accept business as usual. Misplaced policy prescriptions aside, members of the Trump admin-

istration were correct in stating that the presence of human rights violators undermines the body's efficacy. Similarly, while Israeli policies in the Palestinian territories are worthy of international attention, no government operating in good faith should claim that these policies justify garnering substantially more of the Council's time and resources than, for example, North Korea's totalitarianism, Myanmar's genocidal persecution of its Rohingya population, or Chinese abuses in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Given practical limitations on how it can fundamentally reform the Council's operations, U.S. reengagement with the body should be based not upon unworkable demands, but on diplomatic leadership. A future Secretary of State should, therefore, couple a public announcement of U.S. reengagement with the Council with a concerted diplomatic effort to assemble a likeminded coalition dedicated to unilaterally improving the body's function. Countries engaged in the effort would likewise announce, via a public pledge, coordinated steps they would undertake to strengthen the Council.

This pledge should, at a minimum, contain the following elements:

- **Voluntarily submission to public vetting.** At present, there is no requirement that countries seeking Council membership undergo any additional scrutiny as a condition of their candidacy. The United States and likeminded nations should accordingly request that the President of General Assembly or the Council host a special session in advance of annual Council elections during which candidates for the Council can present their qualifications for membership, and concerned countries and civil society can provide third-party assessments. Although NGOs have organized forums outside official U.N. settings in the past,³⁴ such private events have been easy for candidates to ignore. This would not be true of candidate reviews that occur in the context of official U.N. proceedings. Participation would be voluntary, but the absence of a candidate would not preclude other participants from commenting on that candidate's human rights record. The United States should, of course, pledge to participate in such a public vetting when it seeks to rejoin the Council.

³³ G. A. Res. 60/251, *supra* note 5.

³⁴ Peter Splinter, Open Global Rights, *Elections without choice: "clean slates" in the Human Rights Council* (Oct. 12, 2017) available at <https://www.openglobalrights.org/election-without-choice-clean%20slates-in-the-human-rights-council/>.

- **Promotion of strong candidates and competitive elections.** The poor human rights records of candidates running for Council membership, in conjunction with frequent “clean-slate” elections, allows for some of the world’s worst human rights abusers to serve on the body. The United States should set an example by identifying states with strong human rights records that have never served on the Council and providing them with the diplomatic support and technical resources to stand successfully for a Council seat. It should synchronize this announcement with public statements from a cross-regional group of rights-respecting governments, who will likewise publicly pledge to champion strong candidates and competitive elections within their own regional blocs.
- **Commitments to funding the Office of the High Commissioner.** The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) serves as a secretariat and technical support body to the Council, in addition to carrying out some independent functions. OHCHR is not under the Council’s direct control—High Commissioners have made statements and issued reports criticizing Council members on numerous occasions³⁵—but the office plays a crucial role in ensuring that the Council can discharge its mandate. Since 2018, the Trump administration has elected not to fund OHCHR.³⁶ Withholding these funds undermines one of the strongest voices for human rights in the U.N. system and should be reversed at the first opportunity.
- **Opposition to any member subject to a Council mandate.** Countries that have been identified by the Council as meriting an independent inquiry into human rights violations should not have a seat at the Council table. At a minimum, their participation poses an unacceptable conflict of interest. It also signals that they are unlikely to take seriously abuses occurring in other countries. The United States and likeminded governments should accordingly pledge to vote against the candidacy of any country that is the focus of a special procedure of the Council.
- **Voting to suspend any member with documented pattern of violations.** Resolution 60/251’s requirement that two-thirds of General Assembly members vote in support to remove a Council member has made suspension of Council members a dead letter in all but the most extreme circumstances. Nevertheless, there is still value in forcing votes on suspension where Council-mandated inquiries have produced credible evidence of systematic and grave human rights violations. In such cases, the publicity generated by the suspension campaign itself may prove as embarrassing to the offending member as actual suspension. In addition, such efforts may discourage members against whom suspension is sought from seeking reelection to the Council, and dissuade human rights violating governments from running for a Council seat in the first place. The United States and likeminded governments should, therefore, pledge to organize suspension votes within the General Assembly whenever a sitting Council member is credibly shown to have committed systematic and grave human rights violations.
- **Bundling all country-specific resolutions under one agenda item.** The existence of a separate item on the Council’s agenda for matters relating to Israel and Palestine is inefficient and has little substantive justification. The United States should accordingly lobby other Council members to ensure that condemnatory resolutions concerning Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories be passed under the same agenda item as those for all other countries. Although such a change may seem a formality, it would likely mean less time and fewer Council resources spent on Israel relative to other human rights situations. It would also serve as a symbolic acknowledgment that the actions of the government of Israel should not be presumptively viewed as more deserving of Council’s resources than those of other governments.

35 Nick Cumming-Bruce, *U.N. Rights Chief, Denouncing ‘Gross Inequalities,’ Jobs at China and Israel*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2019) available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/06/world/europe/un-rights-bachelet.html>; Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Opening Statement at the 30th session of the Human Rights Council (Sep. 14, 2015) available at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16414>.

36 Congressional Research Service, IF11457, *In Focus: United Nations Issues: U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights* (Mar. 13, 2020) available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF11457.pdf>.

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