Britain condemns ‘anti-Israel bias’ at UN Human Rights Council

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/britain-condemns-anti-israel-bias-at-un-human-rights-council/>

Britain on Monday urged the UN Human Rights Council to reform its treatment of Israel, joining the United States in demanding an end to what has been [been described](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-slams-sham-un-human-rights-council-after-5-new-anti-israel-resolutions/) as the body’s bias against the Jewish state.

Addressing the opening of the 38th council session, British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson criticized the council’s controversial Agenda Item 7, a permanent fixture on the schedule exclusively devoted to discussing rights abuses in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

“We share the view that the dedicated Agenda Item 7 focused solely on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is disproportionate and damaging to the cause of peace, and unless things change we shall vote next year against all resolutions introduced under Item 7,” Johnson said.

Israel is the only country with a dedicated council item. Item 7 on “Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories” has been part of the council’s regular business 2007, almost as long as it has existed. The council was established in 2006.

Washington, some European countries and Australia have sided with Israel in condemning Item 7 as prejudiced, noting that countries with worse rights records in recent years, like Syria, are spared such intense scrutiny.

While previous US administrations have criticized Item 7, President Donald Trump’s government has raised the prospect of withdrawing from the council unless it is scrapped.

Diplomats who requested anonymity [told the Associated Press last week](https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-poised-to-quit-uns-human-rights-council-over-anti-israel-bias/)that it appeared more a matter of when, not if, the pullout threatened last year by the US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, will happen. The United States could announce its decision as early as Tuesday, an official said.

Johnson noted, however, that the council had an important role to play in “the Israeli-Palestinian conflict under the right agenda item.”

Each council session includes an agenda item on so-called country specific situations, known as Agenda Item 4, where debates on the crises in Syria, Burundi and others typically take place.

Efforts by Haley and other American diplomats to end or to water down the routine scrutiny of Israel have failed in recent months at the UN General Assembly in New York.

During her visit to Geneva a year ago, Haley denounced the council as a “forum for politics, hypocrisy and evasion.” She accused member countries such as Venezuela, Cuba, China, Burundi and Saudi Arabia of failing to fulfill their duties to “uphold the highest standards” of human rights, while emphasizing what she said was the council’s anti-Israel bias.

Haley said then that the United States didn’t want to leave the council, but would do so if it did not make changes.