U.N. COULD UPDATE SETTLEMENT BLACKLIST PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER

June 19, 2018

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The Jerusalem Post

<https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/UN-to-renew-blacklist-of-companies-working-in-West-Bank-east-Jerusalem-560307>

The United Nations could update its black list of companies doing business in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Golan Heights by September, a top human rights official said.

The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) had [mandated the creation of such a list in 2016](https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/UN-Ambassador-Danon-slams-publication-of-UN-settlements-blacklist-540319) and has warned that business activity with Israeli entities over the pre-1967 lines can be considered criminal activity under international law.

In January, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reported work on the list was delayed due to lack of resources.

It explained that it had whittled its initial list of 321 companies believed to meet the criteria for inclusion in the database down to 206. Out of those, it had contacted only 64.

The administration of US President Donald Trump has warned that it could quit the UNHRC if the list is published.

Reuters reported on Friday that talks between the US and the UNHRC over reform measures have failed to meet Washington’s demands, suggesting that US withdrawal from the UNHRC could be imminent.

On Monday, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said his office would “continue its work on the database of business enterprises engaged in specific activities related to Israeli settlements.” He added that there could be “an update possibly before September.”

Zeid spoke at the opening of the UNHRC’s 38th session in Geneva, which is his last as he is scheduled to leave his post at the end of August.

Zeid took Israel to task in his opening speech for failing to assist its investigatory officials, including Michael Lynk, who is the UNHRC’s special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories.

“This has been the case for three successive holders of the mandate,” Zeid said. Israel is the only country with a designated UNHRC rapporteur.

In the past, Israel has denied access to all commissions of inquiry, said Zeid, as he urged it to open its door to officials involved in the UNHRC probe into the IDF’s activity along the Israeli-Gaza border.

“I urge Israel to provide access to all human rights mechanisms – including the investigative body mandated last month – to enable impartial monitoring and advance accountability and justice,” Zeid said.

At the same session, British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson warned that [his country would begin voting against anti-Israel resolutions unless the UNHRC stopped its bias against the Jewish state by the end of 2018](https://www.jpost.com/International/Britain-warns-UNHRC-Stop-the-bias-or-well-vote-against-anti-Israel-560274).

Johnson specifically took issue with the UNHRC mandate that it debate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at each session under Agenda Item 7.

“We share the view that a dedicated agenda item focused solely on Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories is disproportionate and damaging to the cause of peace,” Johnson said.

The Agenda Item 7 debate is set for Monday, July 2.

The US and Israel have long lobbied for the elimination of Agenda Item 7. There had been some speculation that the US would appeal to the UN General Assembly and ask that it vote to eliminate it, but no such appeal took place.

The US consistently votes against all Agenda Item 7 resolutions, while European Union countries, including the UK, tend to abstain. But British Prime Minister Theresa May’s government has been increasingly vocal on the issue of Agenda Item 7 and UNHRC bias on Israel.

Johnson told UNHRC Monday: “Unless things change, we shall move next year to vote against all resolutions introduced under Agenda Item 7.

“That does not mean,” Johnson said, “that we in the UK are blind to the value of this council, including the work it could do on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict under the right agenda item.