Israel hails US for halting Human Rights Council funding

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An Israeli minister on Thursday praised US President Donald Trump’s national security adviser, John Bolton, for saying the United States would be cutting its funding for the UN Human Right Council and for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

“The UN’s human rights bodies have undermined their founding values by becoming hotbeds of anti-Israel extremism, hate and boycott campaigns,” Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan said in a statement.

In the US administration’s latest blow against the United Nations, Bolton [said earlier Thursday](https://www.timesofisrael.com/having-pulled-out-of-unhrc-bolton-says-us-will-now-cut-its-funding/) in an interview with the Associated Press: “We are going to de-fund the Human Rights Council.”

He warned that other UN agencies could also be up for cuts in US funding.

“If Ambassador Bolton’s announcement spurs the UN to start investing in exposing the world’s worst violators of human rights, rather than in delegitimizing the Middle East’s one true democracy, millions around the world will benefit,” said Erdan, who is also strategic affairs minister.

The Trump administration pulled out of the 47-member body in June, accusing it of anti-Israel bias and of allowing countries with poor human rights records to be among its members.

The move announced by Bolton means the Human Rights Council will lose one of its largest donors.

Bolton, a frequent critic of the United Nations, served as US ambassador to the UN under George W. Bush’s administration.

In his interview, Bolton rejected claims by some UN officials who insist the council gets its funding through the regular UN budget — meaning that its operating expenses can’t be specifically targeted.

The United States pays about 22 percent of the UN budget — its largest single donor — as part of what’s known as an “assessment” based on economic weight and other factors.

“We’ll calculate 22 percent of the Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner’s budget, and our remittances to the UN for this budget year will be less 22 percent of those costs — and we’ll say specifically that’s what we’re doing,” Bolton said. “We expect that impact to occur on the Human Rights Council.”

In June, the US announced its decision to leave the council, condemning the “hypocrisy” of its members and its “unrelenting bias” against Israel.

The Geneva-based body was established in 2006 to promote and protect human rights worldwide, but its pronouncements and reports have often infuriated the US — in particular, the council’s relentless focus on Israeli policies toward the Palestinians.

Israel is the only country that has a dedicated agenda item at council meetings, one defended in particular by the Arab bloc of countries.

Israel, which isn’t a member of the council, welcomed the US decision at the time, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu calling the UN Human Rights Council a “biased, hostile, anti-Israel organization.”

“Instead of dealing with regimes that systematically violate human rights, the UNHRC obsessively focuses on Israel, the one genuine democracy in the Middle East,” Netanyahu said.