Despite ‘anti-Israel bias,’ US to stay on UN human rights body

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<http://www.timesofisrael.com/despite-anti-israel-bias-us-seeking-to-stay-on-un-human-rights-body/>

A top US diplomat said the United States will seek another term on the Human Rights Council, a sign the Obama administration is looking past criticism from Republicans who say the UN-backed body coddles dictators and bashes Israel too much.

In a speech at the 47-member council in Geneva, Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken highlighted US concerns about the human rights records of countries including Russia, Egypt, Cuba and China, and accused the HRC of “persistent bias” against Israel.

Speaking to reporters afterward Wednesday, he criticized the North Korean government’s “particularly abysmal” human rights record and “delusional refusal to confront the realities of what it is doing to its own people.”

At the council Tuesday, North Korea’s foreign minister expressed disregard for UN resolutions critical of its rights record.

Last year, UNHRC council members voted overwhelmingly for a resolution [condemning Israel](http://www.timesofisrael.com/unhrc-endorses-gaza-report-with-european-support/) over the findings of a UN report into Israel’s 50-day conflict with Hamas in the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2014.

[The UN report](http://www.timesofisrael.com/un-gaza-report-says-israel-hamas-may-have-committed-war-crimes/) published in June 2015 said Israeli airstrikes on residential buildings in Gaza caused many civilian deaths and suggested Israeli leaders knowingly endangered Gazans. It accused both Israel and Hamas of possible war crimes during the conflict.

Forty-one of the 47 UNHRC council members voted in favor of the resolution, including the eight sitting European Union members: France, Germany, the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Latvia and Estonia.

The European countries said they were disappointed that the resolution didn’t explicitly mention rockets fired by Hamas toward civilian areas in Israel, but elected to back it nonetheless.

Only the US, which slammed the report as biased, voted against. Five nations abstained: Kenya, Ethiopia, Macedonia, India and Paraguay.

The report and subsequent vote were roundly dismissed as biased by Israeli officials. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the time said that the UN body “cares little about the facts and less still about human rights.”