Israel, US Discuss Strategy to Counter UN Human Rights Council

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Israel and the United States have held serious discussions to formulate a joint approach with regard to the UN Human Rights Council.

The talks come in advance of the anticipated UNHRC publication this year of a data base – known to Israel as the black list – of companies doing business with West Bank settlements or Jewish entities in east Jerusalem.

A story on Politico.com and a statement earlier this week by US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Erin Barclay indicated that the Trump administration may consider pulling out of the council, in part because of its anti-Israel bias.

“As we consider our future engagements, my government will be considering the council’s actions with an eye to reform, to more fully achieve the council’s missions to protect and promote human rights,” Barclay said in a statement to the UNHRC on Wednesday.

It is presumed that the threat of the US leaving the UNHRC could force it to change policy, including its policy on Israel. The inter-governmental body has condemned Israel more times than it has any other country.

On Thursday morning, Army Radio published a transcript of tape recording from a closed portion of a Likud ministerial meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after he returned from his February 15 meeting with US President Donald Trump.

“During the trip I raised the question of whether the United States should remain in the Human Rights Council,” Army Radio quoted Netanyahu as saying.

Likud MK Anat Berko questioned whether it would be more beneficial for the US to remain in the UN body and retain the power to impact votes taken there.

According to Army Radio, Netanyahu responded, “It’s better to leave! These organization must be delegitimized.”

The US is one of 47-member states of the UNHRC.

The data base was initially scheduled to be completed in time for the 34th UNHRC session in March. But at the end of January, the UNHRC Bureau agreed to delay its publication to allow more time to compile information.

The Obama administration had already stated its intention to boycott the blacklist, even though its policy had been to engage with the UNHRC. Under former president George W. Bush, America boycotted the council altogether.