US, 21 other countries lash UN rights council for report blaming Israel for conflict

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The US and 21 other countries issued a harsh rebuke on Monday to the United Nations Human Rights Council after a Commission of Inquiry formed to probe Israel released a report last week condemning the Jewish state.

The report — the first submitted to the Commission of Inquiry (COI) established last year by the Human Rights Council — blamed Israel’s “persistent discrimination against Palestinians” for violence between the two sides.

“We believe the nature of the COI established last May is further demonstration of long-standing, disproportionate attention given to Israel in the Council and must stop,” US Ambassador Michèle Taylor read out at the 50th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, where the report was being debated.

“We continue to believe that this long-standing disproportionate scrutiny should end, and that the Council should address all human rights concerns, regardless of country, in an even-handed manner,” she said.

“Regrettably, we are concerned that the Commission of Inquiry will further contribute to the polarization of a situation about which so many of us are concerned,” Taylor said.

In addition to the US and Israel, the statement was signed by Austria, Bulgaria, Brazil, Canada, Cameroon, Colombia, Croatia, Eswatini, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, Liberia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, North Macedonia, Holland, Palau, Togo and the United Kingdom.

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid thanked his US counterpart Antony Blinken and all the countries that signed on.

“Today is a day of change at the Human Rights Council,” Lapid said. “A day on which morality is overcoming hypocrisy.”

In an 18-page report [released last week](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-probe-blames-israel-for-perpetuating-conflict-with-palestinians/)focused on root causes of the conflict, the COI blamed Israeli “discrimination against Palestinians” for violence between the two sides. The commission took two trips to research the report, one to Geneva and the other to Jordan.

Israel has refused to cooperate with the commission and has not granted it entry into Israel or access to Palestinian-controlled areas in the West Bank and Gaza.

Hours after its release, US State Department spokesman Ned Price [issued a statement](https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-slams-one-sided-un-probe-blaming-israel-for-perpetuating-the-conflict/) saying that “while the US believes the Human Rights Council (HRC) plays a crucial role in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms globally, this COI and report do not advance this goal.”

The Biden administration brought the US back into the HRC last year after former president Donald Trump withdrew its membership in 2018. While the US has acknowledged the council’s previous bias against Israel, Washington argues it’s better for it to have a seat at the table where it can influence HRC decisions.

The council voted to establish the COI shortly after the May 2021 Gaza war. The US condemned the move as well, saying its “open-ended and vaguely defined nature… represents a one-sided, biased approach that does nothing to advance the prospects for peace.”

The Foreign Ministry dismissed the report as “nothing more than a waste of money and effort of the United Nations’ systems, part and parcel of the witch hunt being carried out by the Human Rights Council against Israel.”