An end to the UN’s human-rights farce

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U.S. President Donald Trump has been on the receiving end of a lot of criticism for his willingness to flout tradition and engage in needless fights with friends while at the same time ingratiating foes. Trump seems at times to view the world as a Hobbesian war of all against all, in which the United States has no real allies or enemies. But there are times when his instinctive distrust of the foreign-policy establishment isn’t just on point. It’s absolutely necessary.

Such a moment came again this week when U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley [announced America’s withdrawal from the U.N. Human Rights Council](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2018/06/19/mike_pompeo_and_nikki_haley_announce_us_withdrawal_from_un_human_rights_council_citing_anti-israel_bias.html). As she eloquently stated, “For too long, the human-rights council has been a protector of human-rights abusers and a cesspool of political bias. Regrettably, it is now clear that our call for reform was not heeded.”

But the irony here is that the U.S. move, which Haley indicated was motivated by American concern over the HRC’s targeting of Israel, is being used as fodder for attacks on Trump by his critics. While the president gives his critics plenty of ammunition, their willingness to come to the defense of a morally bankrupt institution tells us a lot more about them and the hysteria Trump generates on the left than it does about his shortcomings.

The merits of the case for leaving the UNHRC are unassailable. As Haley pointed out, the council’s obsessive hatred for Israel has turned it into a sad joke:

“Earlier this year, as it has in previous years, the Human Rights Council passed five resolutions against Israel—more than the number passed against North Korea, Iran and Syria combined. This disproportionate focus and unending hostility toward Israel is clear proof that the council is motivated by political bias, not by human rights. If the Human Rights Council is going to attack countries that uphold human rights and shield countries that abuse human rights, then America should not provide it with any credibility.”

Unfortunately, the United States has been lending credibility to the council ever since U.S. President Barack Obama decided that America should join it in 2009. Created in 2006, as a replacement for a predecessor body—the Human Rights Commission—that was equally tainted by hatred for the one Jewish state on the planet, U.S. President George W. Bush saw no reason grant the agency any legitimacy.

Indeed, with the ranks of its member nations swollen by some of the worst human-rights offenders, the council has become more of a parody of advocacy for the cause of freedom than anything else.

But Obama’s faith in multilateralism and the United Nations was such that he overlooked the HRC’s faults. For the next eight years, America kept returning to the council even though it was clear that its members viewed it as little more than a platform for venting their indifference to the behavior of genuine human-rights offenders and efforts to brand Israel as a pariah nation.

Some critics of Trump’s decision claim that the United States could do more good by remaining in the organization than by leaving it. But the Obama administration’s record proved just the opposite. Human-rights offenders laughed at the empty rhetoric of U.S. representatives. Every year, it continued to pass resolution after resolution damning Israel and barely paying attention to real catastrophes. Secure in the belief that the U.S. and the European democracies were too invested in this institution to hold it accountable, the council became more irresponsible and outrageous as every measure of Israeli self-defense against terror was falsely labeled as a crime.

But, as [Lauren Wolfe’s article in *The Atlantic*](https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/06/trump-haley-un-human-rights-israel-venezuela-withdrawal/563246/) demonstrated, Trump’s critics are as obsessed with him as the UNHRC is with demonizing Israel. Quoting anonymous “human-rights experts,” Wolfe claimed the true motive for Trump’s decision was to protect the United States from being labeled a violator.

While no nation, including democratic ones, are perfect, the attempt to assert a moral equivalence between America and tyrannies like Iran, Cuba, China and Venezuela is nothing less than a partisan slur that gives cover to Israel-bashers.

What is the evidence for the attempt to label America as a violator of human rights? According to Wolfe, Trump’s border-security policies are criminal. But while [Trump’s “zero tolerance”](https://goo.gl/xTjXst) policy was wrong, it was, alas, no different from the way virtually every other nation enforces its right to decide who may cross their borders. Illegal immigration to America is not a human right.

Wolfe also claims that Trump’s “threats” to press freedom merit scrutiny from the United Nations. But while the president’s attacks on his media foes are foolish, the U.S. government has taken no actions to repress freedom of the press. Indeed, this administration has been less zealous than Obama’s when it comes to investigating leaks. Nor was Obama shy about abusing his press critics. But in the eyes of his fans, attacking Fox News was acceptable, but calling out CNN, MSNCBC and *The* *New York Times* for their partisan bias is not.

The talk of Trump as a human-rights violator in this context is nothing more than a partisan ploy on the part of those who are more interested in delegitimizing the administration than in holding the United Nations accountable for a bias against Israel that is indistinguishable from anti-Semitism.

As with his decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and to withdraw from a fatally flawed Iran nuclear deal, Trump’s latest declaration flouts the conventional wisdom of the foreign-policy establishment. But each of these moves was the right thing to do by any reasonable moral standard.

The debate over Haley’s announcement shows that some people are willing to sacrifice Israel and the defense of human rights in order to vilify Trump. But if the anti-Trump “resistance” is willing to defend the United Nations’ worst excesses in order to justify their opposition to this necessary move, then it is they who have lost their moral compass.