**A rogues’ gallery at the UN**

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THE UNITED NATIONS General Assembly has never figured out a way to prevent human rights abusers from joining its human rights organizations, often to deflect criticism of their own conduct. In seeking a seat on the UN Human Rights Council last year, the Obama administration hoped to reform the council from within — unlike the Bush administration, which refused to join it when it was created in 2006. But the Obama team’s hope is a long way from fulfillment, as the General Assembly proved earlier this month when it voted overwhelmingly to give Libya a seat on the council.

The Human Rights Council took the place of the UN Commission on Human Rights. The old panel was notorious for including many of the world’s worst human rights violators. The resolution creating the new council specified that its members “shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights.’’

Those words hardly describe dictator Moammar Khadafy’s Libya — recently depicted by a coalition of 37 human rights groups as “one of the world’s most brutal and longest-running tyrannies.’’ Yet Libya was elected to the Human Rights Council with the support of 155 nations — 80 percent of the UN membership. Compounding the scandal, the General Assembly elected other nations with poor human rights records, including Angola, Qatar, and Mauritania, by even larger landslides.

Plainly, the Human Rights Council is no more credible as a human rights watchdog than the commission it replaced. If the Obama administration wants the council to change, the United States must start objecting vocally to the composition of the panel. US Ambassador Susan Rice told reporters earlier this month that the election of “a small number of countries whose human rights records is problematic’’ was regrettable. But when asked whether the administration shared human rights groups’ objection to Libya, Rice replied: “I’m not going to sit here and name names.’’

In fact, naming names is essential. The administration has proved its UN bona fides by joining the Human Rights Council and restoring US funding. But if it is serious about reform, it must also speak out, candidly and bluntly, against allowing the council to operate as a club of dictatorships.