US threatens to cut UN funding over settlement ‘blacklist’ – report

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American Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley has reportedly threatened that the US will cut funding to the UN Human Rights Council if it releases a “blacklist” of international companies operating in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Golan Heights.

“If you publish the list against settlements we will harm your funding,” a report Wednesday by Channel 2 news quoted Haley as saying recently.

The report also said Haley, who has strongly criticized the blacklist and the UN Human Rights Council over its “anti-Israel bias,” warned the US may pull out of the council if the list of companies is published.

The prospect of the publication of the list has caused concern among Israeli officials, who worry it could strengthen efforts to boycott the Jewish state and harm Israeli firms.

“The significance of the publication would be that the UN turns itself into a BDS group,” an unnamed official at the Ministry of Strategic Affairs told Channel 2, referring to the Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions movement.

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[Last week](http://www.timesofisrael.com/us-trying-to-thwart-un-blacklist-of-settlement-friendly-firms/), the Washington Post reported that the Trump administration had urged the Human Rights Council not to publish the list, saying the move was “counterproductive” and would not advance the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Last year, the UN body unanimously voted to compile the database of all business enterprises that have enabled or profited from the growth of Israeli settlements in areas Palestinians see as part of their future state.

The proposal, put forward by the Palestinian Authority and Arab states in 2016, included a condemnation of settlements and called on companies not to do business with Israeli settlements.

According to the Washington Post report, UN human rights chief Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein intends to publish the list by the end of 2017, despite opposition from the US and Israel.

“The United States has been adamantly opposed to this resolution from the start,” said State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert, according to reports. “These types of resolutions are counterproductive and do nothing to advance Israeli-Palestinian issues.”

Nauert said a joint US-Israel effort to stop funding for work related to the database had been unsuccessful.

“We have made clear our opposition regarding the creation of a database of businesses operating in Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, and we have not participated and will not participate in its creation or contribute to its content,” she said.

Hussein, a Jordanian diplomat spearheading the initiative, had already agreed to postpone publishing the list once this year, in part due to US pressure, the Post said. He has reached out to member states for input before September 1.

American companies on the list include Caterpillar, TripAdvisor, Priceline.com, Airbnb and others, The Post reported, citing those familiar with the database.

Israel’s UN ambassador Danny Danon slammed the Geneva-based council last week, claiming the creation of a blacklist amounted to anti-Semitism.

“This shameful step is an expression of modern anti-Semitism and reminds us of dark periods in history,” Danon’s office said in a statement. “Instead of focusing on the terrible humanitarian problems plaguing the globe, the Human Rights Commissioner is seeking to harm Israel, and in doing so has become the world’s most senior BDS activist.”

The statement called on the UN and the international community to reject the “dangerous” and “anti-Israel” initiative.

In June, Haley condemned the blacklist as “the latest in this long line of shameful actions” taken by the UNHRC.

“Blacklisting companies without even looking at their employment practices or their contributions to local empowerment, but rather based entirely on their location in areas of conflict is contrary to the laws of international trade and to any reasonable definition of human rights,” she said in a speech in Geneva. “It is an attempt to provide an international stamp of approval to the anti-Semitic BDS movement. It must be rejected.”

Haley went on to warn at the time that the US could withdraw from the 47-member body unless it reformed, ending its built-in procedural mechanism to condemn Israel, and banning notorious human rights violators from serving on the council.

Since 2007, Israel has been the only country whose alleged human rights abuses are regularly discussed in the framework of a single permanent item on the Human Rights Council’s agenda.