

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

The Honorable António Guterres
Secretary-General
The United Nations UN Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

The United States co-founded the United Nations with the intention of saving future generations from war and reaffirming fundamental human rights. While much good is being done and has been done by the body, many of its member states and agencies are using the U.N.'s privileged platform to advance an anti-Israel agenda. Too often, the U.N. is exploited as a vehicle for targeting Israel rather than as a forum committed to advancing the lofty goals of its founders. These actions have at times reinforced the broader scourge of anti-Semitism, and distracted certain U.N. entities from their original missions.

Although, as Republicans and Democrats, we disagree on many issues, we are united in our desire to see the United Nations improve its treatment of Israel and to eliminate anti-Semitism in all its forms. Through words and actions, we urge you to ensure that Israel is treated neither better nor worse than any other U.N. member in good standing. To that end, we commend the words of our nation's Ambassador to the U.N., Nikki Haley, who recently stated, "It is the U.N.'s anti-Israel bias that is long overdue for change."

We praise you for disavowing the recent anti-Israel report by the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and demanding that it be withdrawn. Going forward, we urge you to pursue a comprehensive effort to improve the U.N.'s treatment of Israel along the following lines:

- The U.N. funds and maintains a number of standing committees, which far too often serve no purpose other than to attack Israel and inspire the anti-Israel boycott, sanctions, and divestment (BDS) movement. These committees must be eliminated or reformed.
- While the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) does some important work on Holocaust education, its member states continue to advance measures that target Israel and deny the Jewish and Christian connections to Jerusalem. UNESCO member states must be made to realize that these actions only undermine the credibility of the organization.
- The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) downplays its role in perpetuating troubling anti-Israel bias and activities. UNRWA must pursue reforms or risk significant consequences.

- Most troubling is the U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Charged with shining a light on gross human rights violations, the UNHRC—whose membership currently includes some of the world’s worst human rights violators—instead devotes time to unwarranted attacks against Israel. UNHRC even maintains a permanent item on its agenda—“Agenda Item VII”—to assess Israel even as numerous other countries, including some represented on the Council, commit egregious human rights abuses against their citizens on a daily basis. Speaking recently at the UNHRC in Geneva, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs Erin Barclay criticized the UNHRC’s anti-Israel focus as “unfair and unbalanced,” noting that the body’s “obsession with Israel...is the largest threat to the Council’s credibility” and “limits the good we can accomplish by making a mockery of this Council.”

The UNHRC should be the premier international body addressing the many pressing human rights challenges of our time in countries such as Russia, China, North Korea, Syria, Cuba, Venezuela, and South Sudan. It is currently not living up to this mission. We urge you to seek specific reforms to end the Council’s imbalanced focus on Israel, including through removal of Agenda Item VII and requiring competition among states seeking membership on the Council.

As both the U.N.’s principal founding member and its largest contributor, the United States should insist on reform. As duly elected representatives of the American people, we take seriously our responsibility to conduct rigorous oversight of U.S. engagement at the United Nations. We are deeply committed to international leadership and to advancing respect for human rights. But continued targeting of Israel by the U.N. Human Rights Council and other U.N. entities is unacceptable. This situation must change. We urge you to engage member states in a comprehensive effort to directly confront and root out this bias.

If you continue to build on your recent action, we stand ready to work with you to eliminate the organization’s anti-Israel bias, and to fight anti-Semitism in all its forms.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Christopher A. Coons
U.S. Senator