The United States returned to the UN Human Rights Council as a voting member in January after spending a mandatory year off the Council and securing reelection last year. At the Council’s 34th Session in Geneva from February 27-March 24, U.S. leadership proved critical to shaping the international response to urgent human rights situations and issues. The United States introduced three priority resolutions that the Council adopted with broad cross-regional support. The United States also actively defended Israel from unbalanced criticism and, through vigorous lobbying, reduced support for these resolutions.

**Supporting Israel:** The United States worked closely with Israel and other partners to reduce support for anti-Israel resolutions introduced under the biased Agenda Item 7, the only Council agenda item focused on a single country. The United States and Togo voted against every resolution under this agenda item, while many partners abstained on the resolutions and the United Kingdom echoed the U.S. call for reform of the Council over concern about the unfair treatment of Israel at the Council and joined in voting no on the Syrian Golan resolution.

* All 5 anti-Israel resolutions were adopted
* On Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, A/HRC/RES/31/35, 4 states changed from abstaining last year to voting in favor of the resolution (Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Republic of Korea)’
* On Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, A/HRC/RES/31/34, 2 states changed from abstaining last year to voting in favor of the resolution (Botswana, Ghana)
* On Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, A/HRC/RES/31/35, 7 states changed from abstaining last year to voting in favor of the resolution (Belgium, Germany, Ghana, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Slovenia)

**South Sudan:** In response to the alarming report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, the United States led a resolution to renew the Commission’s mandate for one year and to collect and preserve evidence that can be used in future judicial efforts. We worked closely with South Sudan, members of the African Group, and other member states to ensure the text was adopted by consensus.

* U.S. was one of the “core sponsors” of the resolution on South Sudan in 2016 – when the U.S. was not a member of the HRC

**Sri Lanka:** The United States was the lead sponsor of a resolution to extend for two years a UN role in monitoring and reporting on Sri Lanka’s implementation of commitments to promote justice and reconciliation. Sri Lanka was one of the 47 co-sponsors.

**North Korea:** The United States co-sponsored a resolution to strengthen the ability of the OHCHR Seoul office to collect evidence that could be used to hold those responsible for human rights violations and abuses in North Korea accountable.

* The resolution has been adopted annually – led by Japan and the European Union – even when the U.S. was not a member of the HRC

**Burma:** The United States supported the establishment of an independent international Fact Finding Mission into alleged recent human rights violations and abuses in Burma, including in Rakhine state.

* The resolution has been adopted annually – without a vote – even during years the U.S. was not a member of the HRC

**Other Country-specific Resolutions:** The United States played a key role in garnering support for resolutions which renewed mandates on Iran and Syria, as well as the Council’s decision to promote technical assistance to improve human rights in Haiti. The United States also supported cooperative resolutions drawing attention to the human rights situations in Mali, Libya, and Georgia.

* The presence of the United States in the HRC has failed to significantly increase support for the resolution on Iran, which has repeatedly garnered less than half the Members votes in favor (only 22 “in favour” votes in 2017 for a body of 47 Member States)
* The number of “against” votes for the resolution on Syria actually increased from 2016 to 2017, while the number of “in favor” votes stayed the same
* The resolutions on Mali and Libya were adopted without a vote, the same result as in years the U.S. was not on the HRC
* The resolution on Georgia – while it was adopted – received only 18 votes in favor for a body of 47 member states

**Freedom of Expression:** The United States was the lead sponsor of a resolution which garnered over 70 co-sponsors renewing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, ensuring continued international attention to this fundamental freedom.

**Torture:** The United States co-sponsored a resolution renewing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Torture.

* The U.S. co-sponsored the resolution even as a non-member in 2016
* The resolution is led by Denmark each year, with or without the U.S.’s presence

**Freedom of Religion or Belief, Combatting Religious Intolerance, and Combating Racism and Xenophobia:** The United States is pleased that the Council adopted by consensus resolutions that underscore the importance of both the rights to freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression. The United States also supported a resolution calling for increased UN attention to the human rights of persons of African descent.

* The resolution on freedom of religion – led annually by the European Union – has been co-sponsored by the U.S. even when it was not a member in 2016
* The presence of the United States did not prevent the adoption of another resolution reaffirming the infamous Durban Declaration, the resolution having been adopted by 46 of 47 Member States in favor with only the United States’ in opposition

**Human Rights Defenders and the forum on Human Rights, Democracy, and Rule of Law:** The United States strongly supported resolutions to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and to continue the forum on Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law. We are pleased that numerous hostile amendments intended to weaken these resolutions were defeated.

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Failures of U.S. leadership on the Human Rights Council left unmentioned in the release:

* The United States lost 12 of 15 votes on resolutions.
* In three of those losses, the United States failed to obtain a single state's vote in support of the U.S. position:
1. The negative impact of the non-repatriation of funds of illicit origin to the countries of origin on the enjoyment of human rights, and the importance of improving international cooperation, adopted by vote of 31-1-16, U.S. as sole vote against
2. Right to food, adopted by a vote of 45-1-1, U.S. as sole vote against
3. Mandate of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by a vote of 46-1-0, U.S. as sole vote against