

[US | Withdrawal from UN Human Rights Council a retreat from human rights](#)

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US Secretary Mike Pompeo and US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley announced today that the US is withdrawing from the United Nations Human Rights Council, citing failed efforts to reform the body's membership and do away with an agenda item focused on human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The 47-member Human Rights Council is the UN's top human rights body.

This is the first time any country has voluntarily left the Human Rights Council. The only other member to leave was Libya, which was suspended in 2011 after the UN General Assembly deemed the government responsible for gross and systematic human rights violations. The US withdrawal comes just days after the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights heavily criticised the Trump Administration's detention and separation of children at the US-Mexico border.

'The withdrawal of the US is deeply regrettable,' said ISHR Director Phil Lynch. 'The constructive engagement of States with a genuine commitment to human rights and the rule of law is essential for peace, security and sustainable development.'

'While the Human Rights Council is far from perfect, it makes a significant contribution to protecting human rights, providing justice to victims, and promoting accountability for perpetrators,' Lynch said. 'The role the Council has played in securing the freedom of detained human rights defenders, in shining a spotlight on human rights atrocities in Syria and North Korea, and in promoting women's rights, LGBTI rights, and freedom of expression online and offline, are just a few examples.'

In recent years, the US has played an important leadership role in addressing country situations of concern at the Council, such as Sri Lanka and China, and in curbing the influence of authoritarian and repressive States.

'Even under the current administration, US diplomatic efforts have been key to ensuring that the Council maintains a strong focus on human rights monitoring, reporting and accountability, and resisting the idea popular among some States that any discussion of human rights in a given country somehow violates that State's sovereignty,' said Salma El Hosseiny, Human Rights Council Advocate at the International Service for Human Rights.

'The US withdrawal from the Human Rights Council hardly comes as a surprise. Nonetheless, it needs to be

understood as part and parcel of a significant and worrying regression on human rights generally, in the US and the world. What we are witnessing today - in the context of rising nationalism, xenophobia and shrinking space for civil society - is a backsliding on respect for human rights. And what is needed, now more than ever, is a commitment to multilateralism, as imperfect as it remains. Multilateralism and a rules-based international order based on respect for human rights is essential for a more fair, peaceful, secure and sustainable world', said El Hosseiny.

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