**State Department Rep says Israel-bashing UN Rights Council Was "A Source of Irritation" to Democrats**

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By AP & Times of Israel Staff

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http://www.timesofisrael.com/us-urges-human-rights-council-to-end-obsession-with-israel/?utm\_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm\_campaign=bd8c00a63b-EMAIL\_CAMPAIGN\_2017\_03\_01&utm\_medium=email&utm\_term=0\_adb46cec92-bd8c00a63b-55284149

The United States on Wednesday called on the UN Human Rights Council to drop its “obsession with Israel” amid reports that the Trump administration is considering quitting the body.

In a speech before the Geneva-based council, US envoy Erin Barclay said the United States’ commitment to human rights “is stronger than ever.”

“Regrettably, too many of the actions of this council do not support these universal principles. Indeed, they contradict them,” said Barclay, the US deputy assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs.

She cited ongoing abuses in Syria and North Korea, and noted in particular the top UN human rights body’s “consistent, unfair and unbalanced focus” on Israel, which she said “deeply troubled” Washington.

“No other nation is the focus of an entire agenda item… The obsession with Israel… is the largest threat to this council’s credibility,” said Barclay, a career diplomat. “It limits the good we can accomplish by making a mockery of this council. The United States will oppose any effort to delegitimize or isolate Israel.

“When it comes to human rights no country should be free from scrutiny, but neither should any democratic country be regularly subjected to unfair, unbalanced and unfounded bias,” she added.

The council’s annual rebuke of Israel has been a particular source of irritation for both Republican and Democratic US administrations.

The US declined to seek a seat on the 47-member council when it was formed in 2006, citing skepticism about the membership of some authoritarian states. It joined the council in 2009, after Obama’s election, and has played a key role rallying like-minded nations in condemning human rights abuses around the globe.

She said the United States is dedicated to protecting and promoting universal human rights, including freedom of religion, freedom of assembly and freedom of speech.

“As we consider our future engagements, my government will be considering the council’s actions with an eye toward reform to more fully achieve the council’s mission to protect and promote human rights,” Barclay said.