U.N. Human Rights Adviser: Trump Won’t Last Four Years

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A left-wing Swiss sociologist who advises the U.N. Human Rights Council predicts that President Trump will not serve a full term, saying that his tenure will be cut short either by psychiatric problems or insurmountable pressure.

Jean Ziegler, who has a history of sympathizing with despotic regimes and criticizing the U.S. and Israel, told the Austrian daily *Kurier* that both impeachment or premature resignation were conceivable.

“I do not believe that Trump will remain in office for four years,” he said in German. “Either there will be psychiatric problems or the pressure will become so great that he can no longer govern.’

Ziegler envisaged the emergence of a “moral insurrection,” with Americans declaring that Trump is not their president. The perception that “there are billionaires in the White House who only pursue their own profit maximization” will unify people of all regions and camps, he said.

Ziegler recalled the size of anti-Trump protests – or what he called resistance against the “xenophobic, vulgar, anti-feminist, anti-solidarity Trump rhetoric.”

Ziegler, who works for the U.N. in Geneva, said there was deep concern both there and at headquarters in New York, over U.S. proposals to cut funding: “People are traumatized.”

 (U.S. taxpayers account for $7-8 billion a year in “assessed” and “voluntary” contributions for the U.N. system.  The administration’s proposed FY 2018 budget seeks unspecified reductions to U.S. funding for the U.N. regular and [peacekeeping budgets](http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/patrick-goodenough/24-billion-peacekeeping-trump-administration-mulls-un-funding-cuts), as part of a 28 percent reduction in funding for the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development.)

Ziegler called it “a dangerous situation.” Noting that the U.S. is the largest donor by far, he warned, “If Trump reduces the payments massively, the U.N. is paralyzed.”

Elsewhere in the lengthy interview, the 82-year-old expounded his views on what he called the “cannibal” world order.

“We live under the dictatorship of the global financial capital,” he said. “Oligarchs of the 500 largest corporations control 52.8 percent of the world gross social product, that is, the value of all the wealth produced in a year.”

“This is the kind of power that no king, emperor, or pope ever possessed. Corporations are not under state control and follow only one strategy – to maximize profit. And today in the U.S., billionaires are in power directly.”

'Unfit for continued service'

From 2000 to 2008, Ziegler served as the U.N.’s “special rapporteur on the right to food” – a post falling under the world body’s human rights office. When the position came up for renewal halfway through that period, the U.S. alone voted no, accusing him of irresponsible statements and of abusing his mandate.

In 2007 he became the first U.N. human rights expert to be allowed to visit Cuba, where he declared that the U.S. “illegal blockade” of the island was the main obstacle to Cubans getting access to food.

The Geneva-based NGO U.N. Watch, [a longstanding critic of Ziegler](https://www.scribd.com/document/22194929/Jean-Ziegler-s-Campaign-against-America), said at the time he turned the visit into “a propaganda exercise for the Castro regime.”

Earlier, Ziegler collaborated with Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi in establishing an award called the Muammar Gaddafi Human Rights Prize, which was awarded to Castro in 1998. (Other recipients included Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, the leftist leaders of Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia, and Roger Garaudy, a French author and convert to Islam who denied the Holocaust.)

In 2005, a comment by Ziegler comparing Israelis to concentration camp guards brought a reprimand from then-U.N. secretary-general Kofi Annan. Seventy U.S. lawmakers from both parties wrote to Annan to thank him, and [urged him to take “disciplinary action”](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/AnnanLetter.pdf) against Ziegler.

Nonetheless, when his “right to food” tenure ended, the U.N. Human Rights Council in 2008 elected Ziegler as a member of its “advisory committee,” an 18-member body that functions as the HRC’s “think tank.” Forty of the council’s 47 members voted in favor of his appointment.

According to U.N. documents, requirements for the post of advisory committee member include “recognized competence and experience in the field of human rights; high moral standing; and independence and impartiality.” The Swiss government, which nominated Ziegler, said he met the criteria.

U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, then-ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, [urged the Swiss government](http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/news/story/?785) to withdraw its nomination of Ziegler, for his “unyielding support of many of the world’s most vicious dictators.”

A former Cuban political prisoner and a group of NGOs also protested the appointment, to no avail.

In a statement after the vote, Ros-Lehtinen said it “reinforces the need for the United States and other responsible nations to demand fundamental reform of the United Nations.”

Ziegler served on the HRC advisory committee until September 2012, and then in September 2013 was nominated for a new term. The U.S. called for a secret ballot vote, but Ziegler was duly elected, with the support of 33 of the 47 HRC members. Then-U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Samantha Power [tweeted](https://twitter.com/AmbPower44/status/368090006880915456) that he was “unfit for continued service” at the HRC.

Last September, Zeigler was given yet another term: This time the U.S. did not insist on a secret ballot vote, and he and six others were “elected” “by consensus.” He will remain in the HRC’s “think tank” until 2019.

During his *Kurier* interview, Ziegler again defended the Cuban revolution, saying that in two-and-a-half generations it had transformed a racist, distressed third world country into a “life-worthy state.”

“Everyone eats, goes to school, has medical care of the highest quality – which is a great achievement in the southern hemisphere.”

He also defended former Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, who died in 2013 (Castro died last year), saying Chavez had in 12 years lifted millions of people from the “worst misery” and given them a chance of a dignified existence.

Asked about criticism from the likes of U.N. Watch about being friendly to dictators, Ziegler called it an unsuccessful attempt to defame him, backed by conservatives in the U.S. and Israel.