WHO’s Anti-Israel Bias Raising Questions About Organization’s Direction

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The World Health Organization's decision-making body has a history of singling out Israel for criticism, fueling concerns of bias as the United Nations organization faces criticism of its response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The World Health Assembly, WHO's policymaking body, has only one item on its agenda directed at a specific country—Israel—according to research by Human Rights Voices (HRV) and the Touro Human Rights Institute, which monitor bias at the U.N.

Agenda items sponsored by WHO have targeted Israel for criticism since at least 2000. Of all the reports produced each year for the World Health Assembly on the health of humankind, only one report targets a specific state—again, Israel.

WHO's focus on Israel is contributing to mounting concerns about the organization's bias and mismanagement, particularly in light of [accusations](https://freebeacon.com/coronavirus/calls-mount-for-who-chief-to-resign/) the agency helped China obfuscate the number of deaths and illnesses from coronavirus.

The Touro Institute views this as a "pattern of highly selective handling of U.N. member states, beginning with WHO's unique singling out and condemnation of Israel."

The Trump administration [signaled](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-world-health-organization-funding/2020/04/12/c3bb53f8-7d0c-11ea-a3ee-13e1ae0a3571_story.html) on Friday it is likely to [cut](https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/10/trump-aides-debate-demands-who-179291) U.S. funding to WHO over what it says is a botched response to the coronavirus pandemic. The administration pointed to multiple statements by WHO director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who goes by Dr. Tedros though he is not a medical doctor, praising China as the virus spread across the globe.

The organization's bias against Israel could factor in to any decision made this week by the Trump administration, which has often criticized the U.N. and its decision-making bodies for unjust bias against the Jewish state.

For years, WHO's World Health Assembly has had just one country-specific issue on its agenda: "Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan." This includes the most recent agenda, which is dated April 6 and slated for consideration at its upcoming meeting scheduled to take place from May 17 to 21.

While the assembly and WHO discuss a range of health concerns across the globe, only Israel is specifically named and condemned in the annual decisions adopted by the agency, according to HRV's research.

Responding to criticism last week, Tedros called on the United States and others to "please quarantine politicizing COVID."

"We should work across party lines, across religious lines. We shouldn't waste time pointing fingers," Tedros said in a statement.

"The WHO president's complaint about politicization at the WHO takes the American public for fools," Anne Bayefsky, HRV's president and director of the Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust, told the Washington Free Beacon. "The WHO was (and still is) a politicized body long before COVID-19."

"Instead of focusing on governments responsible for the world's real health crises, like the vast array of U.N. bodies, the World Health Assembly of the WHO focused its only country-specific decisions and state-specific targeted reports on Israel—at the behest of countries with truly appalling health records," Bayefsky said. "The United States has voted against these one-sided statements and routinely been overruled. The current situation is a stark example of how the U.N.'s pathological obsession with Israel is a global pathology that harms us all."

WHO adopted a report on May 24, 2019, singling out "health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan." It was the only assembly report that year singling out a particular state.

WHO's measures sought to criticize Israel for health conditions in the Golan Heights, contested territory on Israel's northern border that has seen an influx refugees seeking medical care from Israeli doctors.

The United States and several other Western allies voted against the measures.