Bolsonaro: Brazil will vote ‘in line’ with Israel, US at UN Human Rights Council

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/bolsonaro-brazil-will-vote-in-line-with-israel-us-at-un-human-rights-council/>

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro said Thursday that his country will no longer “rig” its vote at the UN Human Rights Council and will instead vote “in line” with the positions of Israel and the United States, Brazilian daily [Folha de S.Paulo reported](https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/world/2019/04/brazils-rigged-un-vote-has-ended-says-bolsonaro.shtml%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

Brazil will no longer vote with “Venezuela, Iran, and Cuba, countries that have no appreciation for freedom,” Bolsonaro reportedly said.

In June, the US announced its [withdrawal from the Human Rights Council](https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-quits-the-uns-human-rights-council-citing-its-chronic-bias-against-israel/), branding the global body a “cesspool of political bias,” particularly over its treatment of Israel. Israel has never been a member state of the Human Rights Council, whose 47 members are elected by the UN General Assembly.

The council’s controversial Agenda Item 7, a permanent fixture on the schedule,  is exclusively devoted to discussing alleged Israeli rights abuses in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel is the only country with a dedicated council item. Item 7 on “Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories” has been part of the council’s regular business since 2007, almost as long as the council itself has existed.

Last month, Brazil joined European Union nations and Japan in [voting against](https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-first-eu-states-vote-against-permanent-anti-israel-item-at-un-rights-council/) Item 7 after years of abstentions or votes against Israel at the council.

Bolsonaro — a combative conservative, with stances and statements progressives and liberals decry as homophobic, sexist, and racist — has drawn comparisons to US President Donald Trump and has sought to forge close ties with Israel. Many of his evangelical supporters are vociferous backers of Zionism.

He visited Israel earlier this month, meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and others, in a sign of growing ties between Jerusalem and Brasilia.

Netanyahu, who traveled to Brazil for Bolsanaro’s January inauguration, has eagerly embraced the new Brazilian leader, despite the fact that the his pledge to move the country’s embassy to Jerusalem appears to be on hold. In the meantime Bolsonaro has announced he will [open a trade office](https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-welcomes-brazil-plan-for-jerusalem-trade-office-as-palestinians-fume/) in the capital.

Bolsonaro’s statements on voting at the UN were made the same day he became embroiled in a row over comments he made that the Holocaust could be forgiven.

Bolsonaro on Thursday told a group of evangelical pastors in Rio de Janiero that “we can forgive, but we cannot forget. That quote is mine. Those that forget their past are sentenced not to have a future.”

The comments, made days after visiting the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and Museum in Jerusalem, drew criticism from the institution as well as others in Israel, including President Reuven Rivlin.

In a clarification posted by Israel’s ambassador to Brazil Yossi Shelley late Saturday, Bolsonaro said his comments were misinterpreted and that his “speech was never meant to be used in a historical context.” He blamed “those who want to push me away from my Jewish friends” for taking his speech out of context.

Bolsonaro’s clarification was not posted by any of his own social media accounts or on his official government site. Instead a video about Israeli water technology was put up.

Many in Israel rebuked Bolsonaro for the Holocaust comments.

“It is not the place of any person to determine whether the crimes of the Holocaust can be forgiven,” Yad Vashem said in a statement.

“We will never forgive and never forget. No one will order the forgiveness of the Jewish people, and it can never be bought in the name of interests,” Rivlin said later Saturday.

Bolsanaro’s visit to Israel earlier this month included a wreath-laying at the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem alongside Netanyahu, during which the Brazilian leader [labeled Nazism a leftist ideology](https://www.timesofisrael.com/bolsonaro-says-nazis-were-leftists-following-visit-to-yad-vashem/), a claim rejected by historians.