Nikki Haley Names Three Countries That Are Standing in the Way of Ending Anti-Israel Bias at Human Rights Council

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In a Congressional hearing today, US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley called out three countries: Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, as standing in the way of her effort to reduce anti-Israel bias at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

At issue is something called “Agenda item 7” at the Human Rights Council which mandates that each time the Council meets,  it must include a discussion of  Israeli human rights abuses against the Palestinians.

It is the only country-specific standing item and it has long been a thorn in the side of US participation at the Human Rights Council. In recent years, the US has lead other western countries to boycott that agenda item when it came up, a practice started in the Obama administration that has been gaining momentum in recent months.  Earlier this month, Haley visited the Human Rights Council and issued a veiled ultimatum: that the United States would seek to leave the council (and pull its funding if) this undue focus on Israel remains.

During her testimony to Congress today, Haley seemed to indicate that there has been some progress on this issue, and that only three countries remain opposed to removing Agenda Item 7. Furthermore, Haley said that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad al Hussein (a Jordanian national), is working behind the scenes to convince Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to pull their support for this Agenda Item 7 and address Israeli human rights abuses under the normal procedures of the Council.

Haley also said that she and Secretary Tillerson have discussed “what pressures we need to put on what countries” to make progress on sidelining  Agenda item 7.

If she is successful here, she will have removed a key  reason why the US would want to exit the Human Rights Council.