**How the US Should Respond to UN’s Latest Anti-Israel Action**

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This week, the United Nations gave new ammunition to Israel’s enemies.

The U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report including a database of businesses active in Israeli settlements in the Palestinian Territories in compliance with U.N. Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/43/71.

Of the 112 businesses identified in the report, 94 are Israeli and six are American (Airbnb Inc., Booking Holdings Inc., Expedia Group Inc., General Mills Inc., Motorola Solutions Inc., and Twitoplast Ltd.). The purpose of the report is to provide a patina of U.N. approval to the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, which seeks to delegitimize Israel and aimed at applying political and economic pressure on companies doing business with Israeli settlements.

The database – also referred to as a BDS blacklist — was delayed several times due to opposition by the U.S. and other countries who see the report as discriminatory. Specifically, the Human Rights Council Resolution focused solely on the situation in the Palestinian territories and did not require a database for businesses active in territories like Crimea, the Georgian territories of Abkazia and South Ossetia, Northern Cyprus, Western Sahara, and other situations.

Secretary of State Michael Pompeo rightly criticized A/HRC/43/71 and the report:

I am outraged that High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet published a database of companies operating in Israeli-controlled territories. The United States has long opposed the creation or release of this database, which was mandated by the discredited UN Human Rights Council in 2016. Its publication only confirms the unrelenting anti-Israel bias so prevalent at the United Nations. The United States has not provided, and will never provide, any information to the Office of the High Commissioner to support compilation of these lists and expresses support for U.S. companies referenced. We call upon all U.N. member states to join us in rejecting this effort, which facilitates the discriminatory boycott, divestment, and sanction (BDS) campaign and delegitimizes Israel. Attempts to isolate Israel run counter to all of our efforts to build conditions conducive to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations that lead to a comprehensive and enduring peace.

The Trump administration left the UN Human Rights Council in 2018 because of its deep anti-Israel bias. For instance, since it was created in 2006, nearly half of the condemnatory resolutions passed by the Council focused on Israel. Alone among the world’s countries, Israel is subject to a separate human-rights item: Agenda item seven, “Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories.” Every other country is examined under item four, “Human rights situations that require the Council’s attention.” In contrast to this obsessive focus on Israel, the Council has never passed a condemnatory resolutions on China, Cuba, Russia, Saudi Arabia, or Zimbabwe despite their terrible human rights records. The U.S. should not return or support the Council until its institutionalized anti-Israel bias ends.

Likewise, the decision of High Commissioner Bachelet to release the report directly targeting a key U.S. ally and supporting sanctions for six U.S. corporations should lead the U.S. to end its voluntary contributions to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, consider withholding its part of the U.N. regular budget funding the Office, and suspend its engagement with the Office and the U.N. human rights experts supported by the Office.

In addition, the U.S. should take steps to help offset the economic pressure that could result from the report. One option would be to direct the new U.S. International Development Finance Corporation to offer financing, insurance, and other support for businesses engaged in the Israeli settlements. When Congress replaced the Overseas Private Investment Corporation with the Development Finance Corporation, a key motivation was to require the new institution to support U.S. foreign policy and economic objectives. Blunting the impact of the U.N. blacklist would help demonstrate that the new institution takes its goal of “advancing U.S. foreign policy” seriously.