The UN is a Hypocrite on Human Rights

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One of the stated objectives of the United Nations is the promotion of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1948 obligates member states to protect freedom of speech and religion, to provide equal rights for men and women, and to protect other fundamental rights spelled out in the declaration's 30 articles.

The arm of the United Nations charged with monitoring human rights violations is the Human Rights Council. It has 47 seats filled by member states for three-year terms. Saudi Arabia currently chairs the panel that appoints independent experts to the council. Other current members include China, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Venezuela and the United Arab Emirates — all are known for [egregious violations of human rights](http://concernedscientists.org/) of their citizens.

China, for example, has more than 1,400 known political prisoners. This includes people protesting Chinese occupation of Tibet, advocates for rights for the Uighur minority, citizens demanding freedom of expression, as well as lawyers that dare to defend them in the court of law.

Cuba deprives its citizens of basic freedoms and has been imprisoning political dissidents for decades.

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Venezuela detains hundreds of its citizens suspected of opposition to President Nicolás Maduro.

Egypt bans independent non-governmental groups and arrests journalists critical of the government of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

Ethiopia detains and harasses members of the opposition political party.

Saudi Arabia sentences citizens suspected of "planting seeds of sedition" to long prison terms and to public flogging.

The United Arab Emirates kidnaps and tortures citizens that criticize authorities.

Assisted by the aforementioned members, the Human Rights Council presents draft resolutions for consideration by the U.N. General Assembly. Since its creation in 2006, the council has proposed more resolutions critical of Israel than of all other member states combined. The George W. Bush administration boycotted the council. In 2009, [President Obama](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/section/barack-obama) reversed the policy.

Since the United States re-occupied its seat on the Human Rights Council the world has witnessed some of the most horrific violations of human rights in the Middle East. The Arab Spring, initially welcomed by human rights organizations, produced violence in Libya and Egypt while leading to a bloody Sunni-Shiite war in Syria and Iraq. It has left hundreds of thousands dead or displaced, and spread violence to Africa and Europe.

In recent years, Revolutionary Courts of Iran sentenced hundreds of citizens to death and thousands more to long prison terms for nonviolent political activism. Since the U.S. focused on the nuclear deal with Iran it has not introduced any resolutions critical of Iran's human rights record. Instead, it criticized Israel for its opposition to the nuclear deal.

In the last year, Turkey bombed Kurdish villages and arrested tens of thousands of its citizens suspected of sympathy towards Fethullah Gulen, a political opponent living in exile in the U.S. This includes [hundreds of teachers, university professors and medical doctors](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/turkish-professors-suffer-while-erdogan-imprisons-them-without-trial/article/2608300). To date, the Human Rights Council has not protested this unprecedented violation of human rights of Turkish citizens.

For 50 years, Israel contemplated the exchange of occupied Palestinian territories for Muslim countries' acceptance of Israel's right to exist. The U.N. Security Council Resolution of Dec. 23 declares all Israeli occupation illegal without preconditions. Israel's possession of the Old City of Jerusalem, where Jews have lived and prayed for thousands of years, now violates international law. This makes future negotiations more difficult for both sides.

By not vetoing this resolution, the Obama administration bowed to the totalitarian regimes of the Middle East that are fearful of having a truly democratic country as a neighbor. In its final days, the administration has embraced the U.N. narrative, long opposed by the U.S., that Israeli occupation, and not the policies of Israel's neighbors, are responsible for the impasse in the region where human rights is a nuisance and where killing a Jew is considered an act of heroism.

It would be of great service to the world if the U.N. diverted its focus from Israel towards human rights abuses by totalitarian regimes. For this to happen, democratic countries (the U.S. included) that provide the bulk of the financial support to the U.N. must question whether the most notorious violators of human rights can be given seats in the Human Rights Council and other U.N. human rights bodies.