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## Inside Track

### UN Council Condemns Israel as Violator of Women's Rights



*Juanmonino/E+/iStock/GettyImagesPlus*

Meeting in Geneva on July 24, the United Nations Economic and Social Council voted to condemn the nation of Israel as a violator of Palestinian women's rights.

In a resolution that reads more like parody than indignation, 40 nations of the 51-nation panel voted to condemn the Jewish State, claiming that Israel did not "respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protections of women and girls."

Forty nations voted to condemn Israel, with only the United States and Canada voting against the resolution. Nine nations — Brazil, Cameroon, Germany, Jamaica, Mexico, Romania, Togo, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom — abstained.

Among those who voted for the resolution were such bastions of female empowerment as Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkey, Pakistan, Yemen, Iran, and China.

Unfortunately, this isn't a joke. The UN panel linked Israel's "occupation" of portions of Palestine, "including East Jerusalem and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan," to the "systematic violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying power, and its impact on women and girls."

But the resolution utterly ignores how the rights of Palestinian women are obstructed by their own governing authorities: the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, and Hamas in Gaza. Nor does it bring to light how women are treated in Palestinian society, which mirrors the treatment of females in much of the Islamic world.

In a separate vote, the same council also condemned Israel more broadly for supposedly violating the economic and social rights of all Palestinians.

But that's nothing new. In 2018, the UN issued a total of 27 condemnations of nations for various indiscretions. Of those 27 condemnations, Israel received 21 of them. The remaining six condemnations were split equally between Iran, Syria, North Korea, Russia, Myanmar, and the United States. The United States was condemned over the child separation situation on the southern border in 2018.



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Really, why is the United States still involved with this absurd organization?

By James Murphy

## South Dakota Requires Public Schools to Display “In God We Trust”



*mevans/iStock/GettyImagesPlus*

A new South Dakota law mandating all public schools prominently display America’s national motto, “In God We Trust,” went into effect in July. The measure, which was signed into law March 18 by Governor Kristi Noem, is meant to inspire patriotism in South Dakota students. It requires that the motto be displayed in all school facilities in an easily readable manner, in lettering that is at least 12 inches tall and 12 inches wide.

Wade Pogany, executive director of the Associated School Boards of South Dakota, said that school districts are complying with the law in a variety of ways. “Some have plaques, other have it painted on the wall, maybe in a mural setting,” he said. He noted that in one school, “it was within their freedom wall. They added that to a patriotic theme.”

The law does not provide state funding for the displays, so each school district is required to foot the bill. For example, the school district in Rapid City, in western South Dakota, paid a total of \$2,800 to stencil “In God We Trust” on the walls of its 23 public school facilities, according to the *Rapid City Journal* newspaper.

Pogany said that one concern of school districts was the danger of lawsuits from secular and atheist legal groups such as the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF). “One of our concerns was that this [law] would be contested,” he said, “so we had asked the legislature to put a ‘hold harmless’ clause into the bill. The state would then defend the schools and pay the cost of the defense.”

Predictably, the FFRF has been one of the first to protest the measure. While no lawsuits are forthcoming from the opportunistic legal group as of yet, in a press release the group’s president, Annie Laurie Gaylor, tersely commented that the FFRF’s position “is that it’s a terrible violation of freedom of conscience to inflict a godly message on a captive audience of schoolchildren.”

By Dave Bohon



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## Americans Cynical, Says Study — Especially About Government



*AntonioGuillem/iStock/GettyImagesPlus*

Much has been written in recent years about America's declining faith in God. But a recent Pew Research Center study, published July 22, indicates that this has been accompanied by declining faith, or trust, in other citizens and our institutions in general — with government being among the least trusted of all.

As Pew writes, "Two-thirds of adults think other Americans have little or no confidence in the federal government. Majorities believe the public's confidence in the U.S. government and in each other is shrinking, and most believe a shortage of trust in government and in other citizens makes it harder to solve some of the nation's key problems."

Moreover, "About two-thirds (69%) of Americans say the federal government intentionally withholds important information from the public that it could safely release, and 61% say the news media intentionally ignores stories that are important to the public," Pew later writes. Of course, this perspective just reflects reality.

Pew also informs that some Americans "worry the government is doing too much, others say too little, and others mention the government doing the wrong things or nothing at all." Clearly, Americans' confusion matches their confidence deficit.

The *New York Times* provides a good summary of the study findings, writing July 22: "The researchers found that levels of personal trust were associated with race and ethnicity, age, education and household income. The share of white respondents who showed high levels of trust (27 percent), for instance, was twice as high as the share of black (13 percent) and Hispanic (12 percent) respondents."

The generational gap in trust that emerged was especially striking. Almost half of young adults between the age of 18 and 29 fell into the low trust category. The same was true in about only one-fifth of respondents 65 and older.

Over all, the Pew study found that three-quarters of Americans thought confidence in the federal government was slipping, and 64 percent said the same about trust in each other.



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By Selwyn Duke

## Millionaires on Food Stamps? No More, Says USDA



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During his State of the Union address in February, President Trump said, “Wages are rising at the fastest pace in decades and growing for blue-collar workers who I promised to fight for. They’re growing faster than anyone else thought possible. Nearly five million Americans have been lifted off food stamps.”

On July 23, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced a rule change in the “food stamp” program — officially called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP — that is estimated to raise that number to eight million.

That SNAP is rife with fraud and waste was a given in that it is a government program that gives away goodies that are being paid for by someone else. But the exposure of the specific loophole that millions have been using to obtain benefits they don’t qualify for began in June 2016, when a millionaire in Minnesota applied for benefits and then received them.

Rob Undersander discovered that Minnesota, along with 42 other states, granted eligibility to people with low incomes but didn’t check on their assets. For 19 months, Undersander’s income was low enough to qualify for SNAP even though, on paper, he was a real-estate millionaire.

How many have discovered the loophole is unclear, but if the USDA’s estimate is even close, the rule change will remove 3.1 million from SNAP’s monthly flow of EBT cards. In essence, it tightens the requirements to receive SNAP benefits so that only those truly “in need” of them receive them.

For the record, Undersander made it clear that not only did he not need the benefits, he gave an equivalent amount away to various charities in his neighborhood, explaining that he “did a better of job of distributing that money than the government did.”

Assuming the rule becomes effective in 60 days, that removal of those millions using the loophole to game the system will save SNAP — and the U.S. taxpayer — an estimated \$2.5 billion a year.

By Bob Adelman



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## Josh Harris, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* Author, Kisses Christianity Goodbye



*Screenshot of TEDx Talks on YouTube*

Well-known author and former pastor Josh Harris announced recently that he has abandoned Christianity because he cannot reconcile the Bible with his current views on sexuality, which include fully embracing homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgenderism.

Harris, 44, wrote the 1997 bestseller *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, which argued for sexual purity among Christians and an approach to seeking a mate that eschewed casual dating in favor of courtship. The book, along with its two Harris-penned sequels and associated materials, was highly influential among Evangelical Christians.

On July 17, Harris announced on Instagram that he and his wife of 21 years “are separating and will continue our life together as friends.” The split, he explained, came about because “in recent years, some significant changes have taken place in both of us.”

Harris’ changes have been both significant and public. In 2015, he resigned as senior pastor of Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland, a post he had held for 11 years. At the time, Harris said he planned to attend Regent College, a graduate school of theology in Vancouver, British Columbia; he had no formal theological training prior to becoming a pastor.

Last year, he renounced *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* and asked his publisher to stop producing it and the related books and materials. In a statement on his website, he apologized for any harm his book had caused — among other things, some people apparently believed that following his advice guaranteed perfect marriages — while acknowledging that it had also helped many people.

Then, just nine days after announcing his divorce, Harris dropped his biggest bombshell. “I have undergone a massive shift in regard to my faith in Jesus,” he explained on Instagram. “The popular phrase for this is ‘deconstruction,’ the biblical phrase is ‘falling away.’ By all the measurements that I have for defining a Christian, I am not a Christian.”

Harris said that “for the past several years” he has been “repenting of my self-righteousness, my fear-based approach to life, the teaching of my books, my views of women in the church, and my approach to



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parenting to name a few.”

“But,” he continued, “I specifically want to add to this list now: to the LGBTQ+ community, I want to say that I am sorry for the views that I taught in my books and as a pastor regarding sexuality. I regret standing against marriage equality, for not affirming you and your place in the church, and for any ways that my writing and speaking contributed to a culture of exclusion and bigotry. I hope you can forgive me.”

In other words, Harris has decided that hewing to the in-vogue way of thinking about sexuality — not only does anything go, but also it should be publicly affirmed and celebrated — is more important to him than adhering to the faith he once claimed, and so he is abandoning the faith.

“Many people tell me that there is a different way to practice faith and I want to remain open to this, but I’m not there now,” Harris wrote. To his credit, rather than pretending that his newfound opinions are compatible with Christianity and treating believers in the historic faith as the problem, Harris recognizes that he is the apostate one and is acting accordingly. Indeed, given a chance to adopt the “progressive” interpretation of Scripture in a February interview with the left-wing *Sojourners*, Harris said, “It actually feels more intellectually honest for me to say I don’t know that I agree with the Bible in general than it is to get it to say these things.”

“It can get to feeling, like, what are you holding onto in Christianity? Why do you need it still?” he added. “I guess if we can with one generation make that radical a shift with the Bible, who’s to say that another generation can’t completely shift the Bible to, you know, to justify something that we would all think is horrendous? It starts to just be silly putty.”

While many Christians are dismayed at Harris’ willingness to turn his back on his faith, Harris claimed, “I don’t view this moment negatively. I feel very much alive, and awake, and surprisingly hopeful.” His hope, unfortunately, is seriously misplaced.

By Michael Tennant



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