



Written by [Daniel Sayani](#) on March 29, 2011

US Withdrawal from UN Human Rights Council Proposed in Congress

Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla., pictured left), the Chairwoman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, announced Monday she will introduce legislation that makes U.S. funding for the United Nations contingent on reform. It also calls for the U.S. to withdraw from the U.N.'s Human Rights Council.



Describing the Obama administration's attempts to reform the HRC as a failure, Rep. Ros-Lehtinen declared that the U.S. should [quit the HRC](#) and "explore credible, alternative forums to advance human rights."

Human rights advocates maintain that the U.N. — especially including its Human Rights Council — is in actuality a hostile opponent of human rights, even allowing on the Human Rights Council at one point or another such brutal regimes as Russia, China, Libya, Iran, and Vietnam.

The watchdog group [Human Rights Watch](#) declared in its annual report that U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon had at times gone "out of his way to portray oppressive governments in a positive way." Moon was criticized for his lukewarm response to the awarding of the 2010 Nobel peace prize to imprisoned Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo. His guarded comment about the award did not include a call for Liu to be released.

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In November he was again censured when during a meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao in Beijing he openly appeared at a round-table meeting of the Chinese Communist Party Central School, which trains party officials in Marxist principles and other subjects. The U.N. head proudly accepted an honorary doctorate at the state-run Nanjing University, where he declared that he saw parallels between the U.N. Charter and the principles of Chinese communism:

For me, we find those common values and shared principles in the United Nations Charter, as well as the body of international agreements that are the foundation of our common quest for development, peace and security and human rights. In all this, we need China's full engagement. We need China's leadership.

Ros-Lehtinen's [comments](#) on the HRC formed part of a broader statement announcing her intention to introduce a revised version of a bill she first put forward in 2007. "Its fundamental principle will be 'reform first, pay later,'" she said in a [statement](#) Monday, adding,

Current events at the United Nations are demonstrating again the failures of that organization and the need for reform.

One striking example is the UN Human Rights Council, which is set to soon pass several more



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anti-Israel resolutions, on top of 33 such measures passed by the Council in the past five years. Israel is the only country on the Council's permanent agenda, while abuses by rogue regimes like Cuba, China, and Syria are ignored. Libya's Qaddafi regime was actually a member of the Council until recently, and other serial human rights abusers still sit on the body.

From shams like the Human Rights Council, to corruption scandals, to mismanagement, and more, it is clear that the UN is broken. But what can be done about it?

Lesson One: Money talks. The biggest problem with the UN is that those who call the shots don't have to pay the bills. Most UN member nations pay next to nothing in assessed contributions, work together to drive the UN's agenda, and pass the costs on to big contributors like the United States. The U.S. government goes along and pays all assessed contributions — 22 percent of the UN regular budget — plus billions more every year. The UN bureaucracy and other member countries know that we will pay in full no matter what, so they have zero incentive to reform.

While Chairwoman Ros-Lehtinen has demonstrated that she is anti-communist in her foreign policy (she is a critic of the U.N., a supporter of America's allies, and an opponent of hostile socialist and communist regimes such as China, Russia, Cuba, and Venezuela), she falls far short of being an advocate for the reversal of U.S. internationalism — she has no intent to support a total withdrawal from the United Nations.

However, she does admit that the U.N. Human Rights Council is beyond redemption, noting that since the HRC was established it has been "as bad as its predecessor," the discredited U.N. Commission on Human Rights. She continued,

The council's rare resolutions criticizing real human rights abuses are usually too little and too late. Why did it take the massacre of hundreds of people in the streets for the U.N. to throw Libya off the Council? Why was Gaddafi's regime permitted to join the council to begin with in 2010? Why are other human rights abusers — including China, Cuba, Russia, and Saudi Arabia — still on the council?

The Obama administration has tried to reform the council from within, but has failed. We should finally leave the council and explore credible, alternative forums to advance human rights.

Like other U.N. reformers, she falls into the dangerous trap of believing that despite the many problems of the org the U.N. and its fundamental structures should be retained, in spite of the many criticisms of the organization. The ideological danger in this position lies in that such individuals do not exhibit any criticism of the fundamental theoretical origins of groups such as the U.N. which advocate one world government, world federalism, liberal internationalism, and [Wilsonian neoliberalism](#).

Even [Citizens United](#) (an organization affiliated with Newt Gingrich) realizes that our membership in the U.N. involves the loss of American sovereignty. Citizens United has an American Sovereignty Project which advocate total withdrawal from the U.N. and opposition to the International Criminal Court.

Despite the dominance of Islamist regimes on the council, which are generally hostile to the United States, the Obama administration believes that it is proper for the U.S. to maintain a presence on the committee, quixotically believing that one country (the U.S.) is capable of influencing and swaying the other members of the council.

Ahead of the current HRC session, [Esther Brimmer](#), Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of



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International Organization Affairs, said that “the Human Rights Council and other UN bodies have improved as a result of U.S. engagement, and how these bodies do advance U.S. foreign policy goals. Critics ignore the reality that without U.S. engagement, these bodies likely would have been dominated even more by our adversaries.”

Brimmer’s defense of American membership on the council fails to acknowledge that the council has also been [unfairly critical](#) of the United States.

Iran’s delegation accused the United States of violating human rights through covert CIA operations “carried out on pretext of combating terrorism.” European countries said Washington should ban the death penalty. Mexico urged it to halt racial profiling and the use of lethal force in controlling illegal immigration over its border. Indonesia, the world’s most populous Muslim nation, called on Washington to better promote religious tolerance.

Rep. Ros-Lehtinen’s legislation to defund the Human Rights Council will no doubt easily pass in the House, but is expected to be rejected in the Democratic-controlled Senate.



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