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The UN Assault on Democracies

**How Authoritarian Regimes Use the UN to
Undermine the National Security, Interests, and
Values of Democratic States**

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Cover Photo: UN Headquarters in New York, Oct. 8, 2024 (Gabriele Maltinti/Shutterstock.com)



Executive Summary

The United Nations was founded to advance peace, security, international cooperation, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. Those aims remain worthy. But the UN system increasingly does the opposite: it gives authoritarian regimes decisive influence over norms, mandates, and institutional priorities while undermining the goals, positions, and national security interests of democracies.

The UN's core problem is structural. Under its one-country-one-vote system, a liberal democracy has the same vote as a regime that suppresses freedoms, criminalizes free speech, and engages in gross violations of human rights.

Authoritarian blocs shape agendas, create politicized mechanisms, and dilute attempts at reform, while democracies provide the majority of the funding for the system that undermines their interests, positions, and goals.

China has become particularly effective at exploiting this structure. Through the "G77 and China" grouping, Beijing is able to leverage an organized voting bloc encompassing 69 percent of the General Assembly. It has repeatedly used its influence over member states to shield itself from scrutiny and advance its agenda. For example, in 2022, after the UN human rights office found possible crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, China was able to use its influence to prevent the Human Rights Council (HRC) from even holding a debate on the report.

Through its recurring resolutions on "mutually beneficial cooperation," Beijing has used the HRC to advance an alternative conception of human rights, one that emphasizes dialogue among governments, state consent, sovereignty, and non-interference rather than independent scrutiny and accountability for abuses.

China's influence affects a broad range of democratic interests. For example, due to Chinese pressure, Taiwan has been excluded from the World Health Assembly, despite its importance to global health. The UN system has embraced China's Belt and Road Initiative, helping legitimize Beijing's geopolitical infrastructure strategy.

Russia has similarly used UN forums to weaponize historical memory, including its annual resolution on the glorification of Nazism, distorted to support its claim that its invasion of Ukraine was a campaign of "denazification."

The composition of the HRC further illustrates this absurdity. In addition to China and Russia, it has counted countries such as Cuba, Burundi, Sudan, Venezuela, and Egypt among its members in recent years. Iran chaired the Council's 2023 Social Forum. Elsewhere in the UN system, North Korea presided over the 2022 Conference on Disarmament, Syria joined the World Health Organization Executive Board, and China, Cuba, Eritrea, and Nicaragua were



elected to the UN Committee on NGOs. These bodies allow human rights abusers to shape the standards by which others are judged.

Democracies also face sustained UN campaigns against vital tools of national security. In 2024, the General Assembly adopted a resolution seeking to recast lawful unilateral sanctions as a human rights abuse, despite opposition from the U.S., UK, France, Germany, Canada, Japan, Australia, and most European democracies. Six months later, it went a step further and created an annual International Day against Unilateral Coercive Measures.

A similar dynamic is evident with regards to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In 2016, the General Assembly launched the process that produced the treaty despite opposition from the U.S., UK, France, Canada, Germany, Japan, Australia, NATO allies, and other democracies that rely on nuclear deterrence for their security. These governments argued that the initiative ignored the security conditions that make deterrence necessary, lacked a credible verification and enforcement mechanism, and risked weakening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the IAEA safeguards regime.

Israel is the clearest case of the UN's institutional double standard and bias. More than thirty UN bodies and mechanisms form a permanent infrastructure of anti-Israel condemnation. Israel alone is subject to a dedicated HRC agenda item, a standing commission of inquiry, and specialized General Assembly bodies, databases, and recurring resolutions.

From 2015 through May 2026, the General Assembly adopted 187 condemnatory resolutions against Israel, compared with 33 against Russia, 12 against Syria, 11 against Iran, and none against China. This is not normal scrutiny. It is structural discrimination.

This discrimination is a challenge not only for Israel but for all democracies facing threats from terror. The machinery created to attack Israel can be repurposed against other democracies conducting counterterrorism operations, defending territorial claims, applying sanctions, or resisting transnational political pressure.

After eighty years, it is clear that the UN has failed at its primary purpose: maintaining international peace and security. While regular and peacekeeping budgets grew, the number of global conflicts rose. For example, in 2024, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program recorded 61 active state-based conflicts, the highest number since records began in 1946, despite UN peacekeeping budgets reaching record heights in the preceding years. From Rwanda and Srebrenica to Syria, the DRC, Lebanon, and beyond, the UN repeatedly failed to prevent mass atrocities, wide-scale displacement, sexual violence, and the build-up of terrorist armies.

UNIFIL and UNRWA further illustrate the failure of UN bodies to ensure security or counter terrorism. UNIFIL failed to prevent Hezbollah's military build-up in southern Lebanon despite millions in Western funding. UNRWA was penetrated by Hamas, provided salaries to terror operatives, and allowed Islamic terror organizations to exploit its infrastructure for military



purposes. Too often, the UN substitutes reports, meetings, and mandate renewals for enforcement, deterrence, and real results.

While failing to achieve its founding objectives, the UN has become a caricature of institutional sprawl, bloat, and waste. Its own review found more than 40,000 mandates issued since the organization's founding, with 85 percent of active mandates lacking a sunset clause or termination review. In 2024, the Secretariat supported more than 27,000 meetings and processed an average of 2,300 pages of documentation every day. Democracies provide the majority of the financing for this wasteful and unaccountable system, yet are routinely outvoted by states that contribute little to its budget or to the pursuit of its founding values. The answer is not isolationism but rather renewed international leadership, accountability, and initiative. Democracies should end broad, automatic support for failed UN institutions. Funding should be conditional, transparent, limited, and revocable. States should withhold support from bodies that enable terrorism, institutionalize discrimination, or advance legal and economic warfare against democracies. If calls for true reform go unanswered, contributions should be cut.

Democratic countries should work together to create alternative structures that replace failed UN bodies through bilateral agreements, capable regional coalitions, targeted diplomatic initiatives, rigorously vetted local partners, faith-based networks, private-public partnerships, and mission-specific frameworks. In this manner, they can advance international cooperation based on measurable results, funding accountability, equal treatment, and coalitions willing to defend freedom and peace.



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres Addresses 72nd UN General Assembly, Sept. 19, 2017 (Aditya E.S. Wicaksono/Shutterstock.com)

Introduction

The United Nations was founded to promote peace and security, advance international cooperation, and encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Those aims remain worthy. But the vast international system that has developed around them increasingly leads to the opposite result.

The UN system gives authoritarian governments a decisive role in shaping global norms, electing officials, creating mandates, defining human rights, and determining budgets funded largely by democratic taxpayers. Regimes that deny their own citizens free elections, free speech, and basic liberties can use the language of multilateralism against countries that protect these values. Across UN bodies and forums, non-democratic states routinely use mandates, platforms, and institutional infrastructure to undermine the positions, goals, and national security interests of democracies.



This does not mean that democracies should abandon international cooperation. They should, however, stop financing and legitimizing institutions merely because they carry the UN name or stamp of approval.

The relevant test is practical: does a given body advance democratic security, peace, and the rights of free citizens? Where the answer is no, funding should end or become conditional, transparent, and revocable.

In areas where the UN repeatedly fails to achieve its aims, where its agenda is dominated by authoritarian states, or where it is irreparably compromised and biased, democracies should establish more effective bilateral, regional, and mission-specific frameworks to achieve the same goals.



How Authoritarian States Take Advantage of the UN System

The UN's central defect is structural. Article 18 of the UN Charter gives every UN General Assembly (UNGA) member one vote.¹ That principle does not merely govern symbolic resolutions. It shapes budgets, elections, subsidiary bodies, mandates, reporting requirements, investigations, and the rules governing much of the UN system. A liberal democracy accountable to voters, courts, free media, and opposition parties has the same vote as a regime that jails opponents and censors journalists. Governments that deny their own citizens basic liberties therefore exercise equal authority in defining human rights, international law and justice, and the proper conduct of nations.

Bloc politics magnifies this inversion. For example, the “Group of 77 and China” bloc includes 134 countries, i.e. roughly 69 percent of UNGA voting members. This bloc gives Beijing and like-minded governments an organized base from which to shape international norms, create and preserve politicized mandates, resist reform, and advance their own interests at the expense of Western democracies.

China has become particularly adept at shaping the UN system and influencing voting blocs in order to advance its interests and shield itself from scrutiny. For example, in 2022, after the UN human rights office concluded that serious abuses by China in Xinjiang may constitute crimes against humanity, Beijing was able to ensure that the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) rejected a proposal to hold a debate on the report. This despite the fact that the proposal sought neither sanctions nor an investigative mechanism but rather asked only for a discussion. China and its partners were able to prevent even that minimal level of scrutiny.²

Beijing has used the Human Rights Council to advance an alternative conception of human rights, one that places greater emphasis on dialogue among governments, state consent, sovereignty, and non-interference than on independent scrutiny and accountability for abuses. Through its recurring resolutions on “mutually beneficial cooperation,” China has sought to recast human rights protection as a process of voluntary, government-to-government cooperation rather than

¹ United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, art. 18, June 26, 1945, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>.

² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *OHCHR Assessment of Human Rights Concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China* (Geneva: OHCHR, August 31, 2022), <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/2022-08-31/22-08-31-final-assessment.pdf>;

United Nations Human Rights Council, “Draft Decision: Debate on the Human Rights Situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China,” A/HRC/51/L.17, October 6, 2022, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3994516>.



one in which UN bodies, journalists, and civil society organizations can investigate and publicly challenge state abuses.³

The same pattern affects concrete security and economic interests. Taiwan participated as an observer in the World Health Assembly from 2009 to 2016, but has since been excluded under Chinese pressure despite its critical importance for challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴

Another major example is the UN system's embrace of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. At the Second Belt and Road Forum in Beijing in April 2019, UN Secretary-General António Guterres declared that the Belt and Road Initiative had assumed "remarkable and urgent importance" and that it "offers a meaningful opportunity to contribute to the creation of a more equitable, prosperous world for all, and to reversing the negative impact of climate change." The BRI is China's flagship geopolitical infrastructure strategy, designed to expand Beijing's economic, technological, political, and strategic influence. By framing BRI as a partner of the UN development agenda, the UN system helped legitimize a Chinese strategic project under the language of multilateral development.⁵

Russia has used UN forums in a similar manner. In 2024, 53 states voted against Russia's annual resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism.⁶ They argued that Moscow had distorted the issue to support its false justification for the invasion of Ukraine: the claimed need to "denazify" the country. The lesson is clear. The UN at times provides a global podium, procedural legitimacy, and voting majorities to states seeking to turn historical memory, human rights, or anti-racism into instruments against democratic adversaries.

³ Democracies which voted against these China-aligned resolutions included Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, the Marshall Islands, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine, and the UK.

⁴ World Health Organization, "Background on Proposed Supplementary Agenda Item: Inviting Taiwan to Participate in the World Health Assembly as an Observer," May 2024, <https://www.who.int/about/accountability/governance/world-health-assembly/seventy-seventh/provisional-agenda-and-documents>;

⁵ United Nations UNifeed, "China/Guterres Belt and Road Forum," April 26, 2019, <https://media.un.org/unifeed/en/asset/d231/d2310979>; Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations, "Jointly Advancing the Belt and Road Initiative and the 2030 Agenda for Global Sustainable Development," September 14, 2022, https://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/zgylhg/202209/t20220914_10765874.htm.

⁶ Among the states which opposed the resolution were Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, South Korea, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States.



Russia and China are not alone in using the HRC and other UN bodies to shield themselves from scrutiny and whitewash their human rights records. The HRC has included, and in some cases repeatedly elected, some of the world's most repressive governments. In addition to China, Cuba was reelected for 2024–2026. Other recent members with very questionable human rights records include Burundi, Sudan, Venezuela, and Egypt. Iran was appointed to chair the Human Rights Council's 2023 Social Forum.

This absurdity is not limited to the Human Rights Council. North Korea presided over the 2022 UN Conference on Disarmament, Syria was elected to the World Health Organization Executive Board in 2021, and China, Cuba, Eritrea, and Nicaragua were elected to the UN Committee on NGOs.

Democracies also face a sustained UN effort to stigmatize sanctions, one of their principal nonmilitary tools for confronting aggression, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and corruption. For years, a coalition led by authoritarian and sanctioned states has used the UNGA and HRC to portray “unilateral coercive measures” as inherently unlawful and a violation of human rights. In December 2024, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on “human rights and unilateral coercive measures” by 131 votes to 55, despite opposition from the U.S., UK, France, Germany, Canada, Japan, Australia, Israel, and most European democracies.⁷

Those states did not oppose humanitarian exemptions or safeguards for civilians. They objected to an effort to recast lawful, targeted national sanctions as a human rights abuse and to delegitimize a tool used against aggressors, proliferators, corrupt officials, terrorist supporters, and hostage-takers. Six months later, the General Assembly reinforced the campaign by creating an annual International Day against Unilateral Coercive Measures. The result is a UN-backed narrative that benefits precisely the regimes most likely to face sanctions for threatening international peace, repressing their citizens, or supporting terrorism.⁸

A similar dynamic was displayed with regard to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In 2016, the General Assembly launched the negotiating process that produced the treaty despite opposition from the United States, UK, France, Canada, Germany, Japan, Australia, NATO allies, and other democracies that rely on nuclear deterrence for their security. These

⁷ Among the countries which opposed the resolution were Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, South Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the UK and the U.S.

⁸ United Nations, “International Day against Unilateral Coercive Measures,” *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/day-against-unilateral-coercive-measures>



governments argued that the initiative ignored the security conditions that make deterrence necessary, lacked a credible verification and enforcement mechanism, and risked weakening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regime. Yet the process has continued to generate political and commercial pressure on deterrence-related industries, financial institutions, and governments, while stigmatizing security doctrines adopted to deter real threats from nuclear-armed authoritarian states.⁹

These are just a small sample of cases where authoritarian regimes used their UN majorities to advance agendas or interests seen as hostile or opposed to the positions of Western democracies. Other examples include issues related to migration, energy, decolonization, and the French ban on face coverings in public.

Nowhere is the UN's double standard more systematic than in its treatment of Israel. More than thirty UN bodies, entities, and mechanisms contribute to anti-Israel condemnations and decisions at the UN. Some of these bodies are specifically dedicated to promoting the Palestinian narrative and targeting Israel. Others are dedicated to broader or more general issues, but invest a significant amount of their energy and resources in singling out Israel.

Israel faces a vast ecosystem of committees, commissions, special procedures, secretariat units, databases, recurring resolutions, and General Assembly bodies dedicated to advancing the Palestinian narrative at the expense of Israel's positions. From 2015 through May 2026, the General Assembly adopted 187 resolutions against Israel, compared with 33 against Russia, 12 against Syria, 11 against Iran, and none against China. Of all countries, Israel alone is subject to a permanent Human Rights Council agenda item. Since its establishment in 2006 and through May 2026, the Human Rights Council has adopted 116 condemnatory resolutions against Israel, more than twice the number directed at Syria and far more than against Iran, North Korea, Russia, or any other country.¹⁰ This is not normal scrutiny. It is structural discrimination, funded by states that profess opposition to discrimination.

The point is not that democratic states should be immune from criticism. The problem is that Israel is treated as a unique category of evil: one country is assigned a permanent agenda item; one political cause has a dedicated committee and secretariat division; one international dispute has an open-ended commission of inquiry; and one democratic military is repeatedly placed in symbolic categories alongside the terrorist organizations it fights. The UN ecosystem thereby

⁹ Among the countries that opposed were Andorra, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, South Korea, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, the UK, and the U.S.

¹⁰ See UN Watch, "Database," <https://unwatch.org/database/>



converts allegations into purported findings, findings into resolutions, and resolutions into tools for lawfare, corporate blacklists, arms embargoes, and diplomatic isolation.

The danger extends beyond Israel. The same methods can be used against any democracy conducting counterterrorism operations, defending territorial claims, applying sanctions, or resisting transnational political pressure. A system that creates permanent machinery against one democracy creates precedents, language, and institutional tools that can be repurposed against others. It degrades moral clarity, weakens the fight against terror, and rewards regimes that use international institutions as weapons against free societies.

The UN has also failed at its most basic purpose: maintaining international peace and security. While regular and peacekeeping budgets grew, the number of global conflicts rose. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program recorded 61 active state-based conflicts in 2024, the highest number since its records began in 1946, despite UN peacekeeping budgets reaching record heights in the preceding years.¹¹ From Rwanda and Srebrenica to Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, and beyond, the UN repeatedly failed to prevent mass atrocities, wide-scale displacement, sexual violence, and the build-up of terrorist armies. On dozens of occasions, its own peacekeepers were implicated in sexual abuse and other grave human rights violations. More UN spending has not produced more peace. Too often, the UN substitutes monitoring, reporting, and mandate renewal for enforcement, deterrence, and actual results.

The UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) illustrates the problem. Security Council Resolution 1701 required the area south of the Litani River to be free of unauthorized armed personnel, assets, and weapons. Nearly two decades later, Hezbollah had built a major military infrastructure around UNIFIL's facilities and areas of operation across southern Lebanon. UNIFIL was unable to prevent Hezbollah's evolution into the world's most powerful terror army, or its attacks on Israel that led to the outbreak of high-intensity conflict in October 2023, following Hamas' October 7 massacre.

UNRWA presents a related failure. In Gaza, the agency was penetrated by Hamas, providing salaries to numerous terror operatives. According to IDF intelligence findings, at least 1,462 of UNRWA's 12,521 Gaza employees, or 12 percent, were members of Hamas or other designated terrorist organizations. This includes at least 80 principals and deputy principals in UNRWA educational facilities.¹² In June 2026, the USAID Office of Inspector General referred 101 current or former UNRWA staff for suspension or debarment consideration for participation in the

¹¹ Uppsala University, "UCDP: Sharp Increase in Conflicts and Wars," June 11, 2025, <https://www.uu.se/en/press/press-releases/2025/2025-06-11-ucdp-sharp-increase-in-conflicts-and-wars>

¹² IDF, "UNRWA-Hamas Connection," <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/unrwa-hamas-connection/>



October 7 attacks and/or affiliation with Hamas's military wing.¹³ The problem extends beyond individual employees. Hamas used UNRWA facilities and infrastructure for military purposes, and educational materials in UNRWA schools and summer camps present terrorists as role models.¹⁴

However, the deeper problem with UNRWA is institutional. Unlike the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, whose mandate is generally directed toward resolving refugee situations through repatriation, local integration, or resettlement, UNRWA applies a sui generis model under which refugee status is automatically inherited by descendants. The number of registered Palestinian refugees has thus risen from approximately 750,000 in 1948 to roughly 5.9 million today, including millions born decades after the original conflict and many who live as Palestinian citizens under the Palestinian Authority or hold citizenship elsewhere. UNRWA institutions and programs repeatedly promote the idea that these descendants of refugees will one day return to Israel en masse, in practice eliminating Israel's existence as a Jewish state. In this manner, UNRWA, a UN body funded in large part by Western democracies, has become a key actor in perpetuating the conflict rather than helping solve it.

¹³ U.S. Agency for International Development, Office of Inspector General, "Investigative Summary: USAID Inspector General's Continuing Investigation Leads to Referral of Over 100 Current and Former UNRWA Staff Linked to Hamas for Suspension/Debarment," June 5, 2026, <https://oig.usaid.gov/node/8155>

¹⁴ Emanuel Fabian, "Directly Beneath UNRWA's Gaza Headquarters, IDF Uncovers Top Secret Hamas Data Center," *The Times of Israel*, February 10, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/directly-beneath-unrwas-gaza-headquarters-idf-uncovers-top-secret-hamas-data-center/>,

Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education, *UNRWA Education: Textbooks and Terror* (London: IMPACT-se, November 2023), <https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/UNRWA-Education-Textbooks-and-Terror-Nov-2023.pdf>



How Democratic States Fund the UN's Institutional Waste and Assault on Democracies

The inherent problems with the UN system are further underscored by the fact that it is funded primarily by the taxpaying citizens of democratic states. In 2024, for example, the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan, Canada, and France together provided about \$27.8 billion to the UN system, roughly 59 percent of all direct government contributions. Indeed, the United States provided more than 183 other UN member states combined, when accounting for both assessed and voluntary contributions. China, the only non-democracy among the seven largest government donors to the UN, provided roughly \$2.4 billion. Numerous developing nations were assessed at less than \$50,000.¹⁵ Yet the principal democratic funders of the UN system are regularly outvoted or outmaneuvered by states that pay little, contribute little to international security, and show little regard for the organization's founding values.

The result is not only political distortion, but absurd institutional sprawl, waste, and bureaucracy. The UN's own UN80 review found that its intergovernmental bodies had established more than 40,000 mandates since the organization's founding, while 85 percent of active mandates lacked a sunset clause or termination review. In 2024, the UN Secretariat supported more than 27,000 meetings and processed an average of 2,300 pages of documentation each day. Meeting and reporting costs alone were estimated at approximately \$360 million annually. The internal management picture is no better. Only about 40 percent of UN entities have strategic plans, and only 30 percent operate with frameworks that connect resources to results.¹⁶

These permanent mandates create permanent bureaucratic constituencies, which generate reports, meetings, campaigns, and demands for additional resources and mandates long after their strategic rationale has disappeared.

¹⁵ United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, *United Nations System Financial Statistics 2024* (New York: United Nations, 2025), <https://unsceb.org/fs-revenue-government-donor>;

Brett D. Schaefer, "Statement before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Intelligence, Hearing on 'U.S. Accountability at the United Nations: Challenges and Opportunities for Reform,'" April 29, 2026, <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA17/20260429/119214/HHRG-119-FA17-Wstate-SchaeferB-20260429.pdf>.

¹⁶ United Nations, *Mandate Implementation Review* (New York: United Nations, August 1, 2025), https://www.un.org/un80-initiative/sites/default/files/2025-09/2512998E_MIR_web.pdf;

United Nations, *UN80 Initiative: Progress Report* (May 26, 2026), https://www.un.org/un80-initiative/sites/default/files/2026-05/UN80-PR2_260526_0833_WEB.pdf.



The UN cannot and will not carry out the reforms necessary to fix these problems. Diplomatic pressure can secure limited administrative efficiencies and budget restraint, but it cannot change the organization's basic structure or member-state incentives. The states that benefit from bureaucratic sprawl, politicized mandates, and weak accountability are the same states with the power to decide the scope and nature of reform. Pressure by the United States and other Western countries has helped produce some laudable cost-cutting measures, including a 15 percent reduction that removed \$570 million from the UN regular budget.¹⁷ But more far-reaching reform - closing obsolete bodies, retiring mandates, removing duplicative structures, and ending politicized mechanisms would require the consent of the very governments that benefit from their existence.

¹⁷ Michael Waltz, "Testimony on UN Reform," testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs, March 20, 2026, U.S. Mission to the United Nations, <https://usun.usmission.gov/testimony-of-ambassador-mike-waltz-u-s-representative-to-the-united-nations-at-a-congressional-field-hearing-on-un-reform/>



A New UN Strategy for Democracies: Conditioned Funding, True Reforms, and Alternative Frameworks

Democracies should no longer accept the spectacle of authoritarian regimes undermining their interests, values, and national security with institutions financed by their own taxpayers. They should end automatic funding, condition support on measurable standards, and redirect resources where the UN fails to meet its standards or achieve its declared goals.

The following are recommendations for democratic nations and all countries dedicated to the UN's founding principles:

First, end automatic funding. Legislatures should require affirmative, annual authorization for contributions to UN entities, mechanisms, programs, and funds. Governments should publish a complete account of all assessed and voluntary payments to UN-affiliated entities, including indirect support through pooled funds, contractors, and implementing partners. No funding approvals should occur without a public finding that the recipient advances concrete national interests, meets measurable performance standards, and has adopted appropriate safeguards.

Second, make funding conditional on conduct. States should withhold funding from bodies that advance legal or economic warfare against democratic states, excuse or enable terrorism, restrict independent civil society, institutionally discriminate against a particular country, or undermine national security-related policies. They should insist on verifiable conditions: termination reviews for mandates; public disclosure of staff, subcontractors, and beneficiaries; independent audits; zero tolerance for terrorist affiliation or incitement; and the elimination of permanent country-specific mechanisms that violate basic standards of equal treatment.

Third, cut assessed and voluntary support where reform fails. Governments should identify the share of UN spending devoted to politicized, duplicative, or counterproductive activity and reduce their contributions accordingly. They should not permit general UN funding to subsidize bodies they would never finance directly.

Fourth, replace failed functions rather than accepting failure. When the UN fails to achieve its declared aims in an efficient, effective, and unbiased manner, alternative structures should be established or expanded. Such structures can often accomplish the same end goals in a more successful manner. For example, humanitarian aid can be delivered through rigorously vetted local partners, international non-UN organizations, faith-based networks, bilateral frameworks, and public-private partnerships. Security and diplomatic cooperation can be pursued through capable coalitions, defense agreements, regional forums, and targeted diplomatic initiatives.



Technical standards, health surveillance, international finance, and sanctions enforcement should be organized through institutions that are transparent, results-driven, and insulated from capture.

Fifth, confront bias and double standards directly. Democratic governments should make clear that no institution maintaining permanent discriminatory mechanisms against a single democracy can expect normal political or financial support. They should demand the abolition of the Human Rights Council's Agenda Item 7; the termination of the open-ended Commission of Inquiry targeting Israel; and the closure of UN bodies established to advance one side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights, and related secretariat infrastructure. They should deny discretionary funding to mechanisms that use unverified allegations to encourage arms embargoes, corporate blacklists, or legal campaigns against democratic states and their officials. Equal treatment must be an enforceable condition of funding, not an empty declaration.



Conclusion

The UN was founded on noble ideals. However, it has become a venue in which authoritarian regimes, hostile blocs, and unaccountable bureaucracies constrain the free world while evading scrutiny themselves. Institutions that no longer serve their founding purposes, and that repeatedly undermine the interests of the states that sustain them, must be judged by their performance rather than their pedigree.

The choice that democracies face is not between funding the UN and international isolation or chaos. A democracy that refuses to finance a body working against its interests is not abandoning international cooperation. It is defending the conditions that make genuine cooperation possible: accountability, equal treatment, respect for fundamental freedoms, and measurable results. The UN was established to advance peace, security, and human rights. When it does the opposite, democracies should work together to establish alternative structures, mechanisms, and strategies that advance these critical goals.

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