



Dignity, Equality and Freedom

## **The poor human rights record of the US, first nation to withdraw from the UNHRC**

The United States of America announced its withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council, during the council's 38<sup>th</sup> formal sitting.

The US Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, cited the poor human rights record of some member states, severe criticism from the Council of Israel, as reasons for the US's withdrawal from the group.

This is cause for concern partly because the Israeli government's human rights abuses and international protection from the United States are well documented. As are the human rights abuses by the United States itself, both historically, and more recently due to policies adopted by the current Administration.

The US has of late worked heavily to curb immigration based on classist and xenophobic ideals; justified institutionalised racism toward people of colour; attempted to ban immigrants for being Muslim; referring to African and Caribbean immigrants' home countries as sh\*tholes; and attempted to maintain a brutal and inhumane policy of forcibly separating immigrant children from their parents.

The government of the US has also rescinded funding for certain health programmes worldwide which adversely impact pregnant women seeking abortions, HIV positive persons and the LGBTI+ community. Attacks from the government on the transgender community and on the LGBTI+ community's legal protections have also been ongoing.

We condemn, in the strongest possible terms, human rights abuses of the United States government and their withdrawal from the Human Rights Council, and see the move for what it is: an attempt to dilute the effectiveness of human rights mechanisms, exercise and reinforce power and influence based on global economic inequality, and escape accountability.

This weakening of the Human Rights Council, which is a vital institution in defending the rights of the world's most vulnerable persons, through mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), is typified by the recent resignation of the Council's High Commissioner, Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini. He had long faced pressure to tone down his criticism of the current US Administration.

"There are many months ahead of us: months of struggle, perhaps, and even grief – because although the past year has been arduous for many of us, it has been appalling for many of the people we serve," he said.

The High Commissioner chose later to resign, saying that seeking another term in office "in the current geopolitical context, might involve bending a knee in supplication."

For many, it is a concerning time indeed. We therefore call on all our allies to stand against hate, and bigotry.

The new UN SOGIESC Expert Advisor, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, said at the recent PAI Conference in Gaborone that civil society spaces are not shrinking, but rather are being shrunk. Now, more than ever, we must push back against that shrinking.

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