

U.S. elected to UN Human Rights Council that Donald Trump quit

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UN Human Rights Council session in Geneva

Geneva, October 15 (RHC)-- The United States has been elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the first time since the Donald Trump administration quit the international body in 2018, citing

what it called “chronic bias” against Israel.

The Department of State announced that Washington won a seat on the council for its next term, starting in 2022. “We will work hard to ensure the Council upholds its highest aspirations and better supports those fighting against injustice and tyranny around the world,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

The Biden administration announced its intention to rejoin the Human Rights Council earlier this year in a stated push to undo some of former President Donald Trump’s “America First” policies, which saw the U.S. withdraw from several international organisations.

The Human Rights Council has faced bipartisan criticism in the U.S. Congress over its reports and statements on Israeli abuses against Palestinians. But the Biden administration has argued that Washington would better serve its interests by being at the table of UN agencies to help shape the internal debate.

“The Council provides a forum where we can have open discussions about ways we and our partners can improve,” Blinken said in the statement on Thursday. “At the same time, it also suffers from serious flaws, including disproportionate attention on Israel and the membership of several states with egregious human rights records.”

State Department spokesperson Ned Price reiterated Blinken’s message later in the day, saying the U.S. would “vigorously oppose” the council’s focus on Israel. But he defended the decision to rejoin the UN body.

The Human Rights Council has 47 member states from across five geographic regions that are elected to three-year terms by the UN General Assembly. The Geneva-based body was established by the UN in 2006 with the aim of promoting and protecting human rights.

The Trump administration left the council three years ago, with then-UN envoy Nikki Haley calling it a “hypocritical and self-serving organization.” The previous administration also quit the UN cultural body (UNESCO), the Paris Climate Agreement and the World Health Organization, among other international agencies and treaties.

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