US slams UNHRC on Israel, Iran

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By [Tovah Lazaroff](http://www.jpost.com/Author/Tovah-Lazaroff)

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The United States on Wednesday slammed the United Nations Human Rights Council for its biased treatment of Israel and for providing a platform to human rights abusers such as Iran.

“It is unacceptable that the HRC [treats Israel differently](http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Israel-accuses-UN-rights-forum-of-bias-over-Palestinians-539546) from every other UN member,” US Ambassador Mary Catherine Phee said.

“The institutional integrity of the Council demands that the efforts to delegitimize and isolate Israel through such blatant bias must end,” Phee told the council as it met this week in Geneva for the start of its 37th session that ends on March 23rd.

Phee took issue with the UNHRC mandates that Israeli human rights abuses against Palestinians in the West Bank must be debated at each session under Agenda 7 and that there must be a permanent investigator assigned to investigate such abuses.

No other country has such a permanent mandate. All global human rights abuses are debated under Agenda Item 4, including those in Syria and Iran. None of the countries who are considered to be serial human rights abusers have a permanent investigator assigned to them.

Such investigators have only temporary mandates that must be renewed.

“When it comes to human rights, no country should be free from scrutiny, including Israel,” said Phee who is the Acting Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of International Organizations. Israel, Phee told the council, must be held to an equitable standard that would apply to any other country.

“The charter itself says the UN organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members.  That is not the case when the special rapporteur’s mandate on the Occupied Palestinian Territories – unlike every other Council mandate – never requires renewal,” Phee said.

During this session the Agenda Item 4 debate will be held on March 14 and the Agenda Item 7 debate will be held on March 19.

When US President Donald Trump took office last year, his administration had threatened to leave the council unless it reformed itself on a number of critical issues including anti-Israeli bias.

The US, which is one of the council’s 47 members, has yet to make good on that threat.

On Wednesday Phee called on the UNHRC not to provide membership seats to countries with poor record on human rights such as Venezuela and Burundi whose “presence makes a mockery of the council’s work.”

On the Tuesday the US said it was “appalled” that Iranian Justice Minster Seyyed Alireza Avaei was allowed to speak during that day’s high level segment.

“Minister Avaei oversaw the summary executions of Iranians in the late 1980s.  As the recent head of the Tehran judiciary and current Minister of Justice, Avaei oversees systematic arbitrary arrests and detentions of Iranians engaging in peaceful political and civic activism, and imprisons them in a network of facilities notorious for suspicious deaths, the use of torture, and denial of medical care,” the US said.

On Wednesday Phee also called on the council to work to end human rights abuses in Sri Lanka, North Korea, Iran, Myanmar, South Sudan and Syria.

“In particular, given the ongoing human rights crisis in Syria, the Council must support the renewal of the Commission of Inquiry. Failure to act with a strong voice would ignore countless and horrific human rights violations and abuses in that country,” Phee said.