Lawmakers: UNHRC Resolution 'Assault on Israel'

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US Representatives Peter J. Roskam (R-IL) and Juan Vargas (D-CA), along with Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Ben Cardin (D-MD) sent a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry and Trade Representative  Michael Froman this week, calling on them to oppose a UN Human Rights Council’s (UNHRC) supporting the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

"We write to urge you to take action to oppose the UN Human Rights Council’s (UNHRC) recent resolution calling for foreign divestment from Israel," the letter began. "This latest action is unprecedented in scope and threatens significant damage to both Israel and the United States, thus warranting a vigorous response."

"The UNHRC resolution, passed on March 24th, is notable in several respects. It urges countries to pressure their own companies to divest from, or break contracts with, Israel, and calls for the creation of a “blacklist” of companies that either operate, or have business relations with entities that operate, beyond Israel’s 1949 Armistice lines, including East Jerusalem," it continued. "The UNHRC’s effort, the latest in a long history of singling out Israel for special condemnation, occurs within the larger context of ongoing political and commercial assaults on Israel’s legitimacy, known as BDS – boycotts, divestment and sanctions."

A "blacklist" attempts to "strangle Israel’s economy and coerce Israel into unilateral concessions," as had been done in decades past, they continued - and it sets a dangerous precedent.

"Any foreign company, including American ones, could be targeted by this effort even if they are conducting completely legal activities under U.S. and international law," they said.

Furthermore, they added, the resolution violates the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 (the Trade Promotion Authority, or TPA, bill) and the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015 (the Customs bill). Ultimately, they said, the resolution "is designed specifically to undermine U.S.-Israel commercial cooperation."

"We urge you to quickly, publicly and forcefully commit that the United States will not comply with the UNHRC resolution," they conclude. "Great Britain has already taken this step."

"The United States must send the same signal, and should work with our other European allies to do the same – particularly the members of the European Union who desire free trade with the United States and are impacted by the TPA guidelines."