

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

US to again withdraw from the UN Human Rights Council, stop UNRWA funding

The actions come one day before Trump is set to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington.



The actions, which reinstate policies in place during the last Trump administration, come one day before the president is set to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington. | Ben Curtis/AP

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President Donald Trump is expected to issue an executive order on Tuesday withdrawing the U.S. from the U.N. Human Rights Council and prohibiting

future funding for the U.N. relief agency for Gaza, according to a document obtained by POLITICO.

The actions, which [reinstate policies in place](#) during the last Trump administration, will come on the day the president is set to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington. The U.S. has long accused the council of bias against Israel and of giving cover to governments with human rights abuses. It comes after the Biden administration paused funding to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, known as UNRWA, [following reports that](#) staffers were involved in the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas on Israel.

A White House official said Monday afternoon that the executive order signing had been moved to Tuesday.

It also comes as the Trump administration has put the future of the United States Agency for International Development — which also promotes human rights abroad — into question over concerns whether it aligns with the president's "America First" policy and how its dollars are being spent.

UNRWA is the main agency providing aid for Gaza's population amid the humanitarian disaster caused by Israel's offensive in the area after the Oct. 7 attack. But the U.N. [fired several staffers last summer](#) after an internal investigation found they may have been involved in the attack.

It's also the next chapter in the country's complicated, back-and-forth relationship with the U.N. Human Rights Council, which was created during the George W. Bush administration. Under Presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden, the U.S. engaged with the council; under Bush and Trump, it did not.

A spokesperson for the United Nations declined to comment.

The White House, in a fact sheet obtained by POLITICO, said the council "has not fulfilled its purpose and continues to be used as a protective body for countries committing horrific human rights violations" and condemned its stance on Israel.

"The UNHRC has demonstrated consistent bias against Israel, focusing on it unfairly and disproportionately in council proceedings," the document says. "In 2018, the year President Trump withdrew from the UNHRC in his first administration, the organization passed more resolutions condemning Israel than Syria, Iran, and North Korea combined."

But human rights organizations and some lawmakers argue that the Human Rights Council is an important, if flawed, entity in policing human rights abuses across the globe. UNRWA, meanwhile, was founded to support displaced Palestinians and has played a key role amid the ongoing conflict in supporting people in Gaza.

The executive order will also require Secretary of State Marco Rubio to review and report to the White House which international organizations, conventions, or treaties that “promote radical or anti-American sentiment,” with a particular focus on UNESCO, the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The U.S. officially withdrew from [the latter organization in 2019](#), also citing an anti-Israel bias.


The president’s actions come amid Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-N.Y.)’s pending confirmation as ambassador to the United Nations. During her confirmation hearing last month, Stefanik said she would focus on reforming the U.N. system and ensuring that U.S. funding is “going to programs through the U.N. that work, that have a basis in the rule of law, that have a basis in transparency and accountability, and strengthen our national security and our partnerships.”

She also specifically called out UNRWA, saying it turned a blind eye to local workers’ ties to Hamas.

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