

June 21, 2011

Friends and Colleagues:

I recently had the opportunity to [speak](#) at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy on an issue the Administration views as crucial to our larger multilateral goals and priorities: the efforts to normalize Israel's status across the UN and broader multilateral system, and to counter vigorously efforts to delegitimize and isolate Israel. Underpinning those efforts is our unshakeable determination to ensure that Israel is treated fairly, that its security is never in doubt, and that Israel has the same rights and responsibilities as all UN member states.



Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs speaking at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy on June 15, 2011. State Department Photo.

This is why you have seen the United States take assertive, vocal action to oppose unbalanced, one-sided actions at the UN General Assembly, the Security Council, the UN Human Rights Council, and everywhere such are attempted. We opposed the deeply flawed and biased Goldstone Report, for example, and stood firm against multiple Human Rights Council resolutions related to last year's flotilla incident. And in the same vein, we will reject any counterproductive attempts to address Palestinian statehood issues at the UN.

Importantly, our efforts on the question of Israel in the UN go well beyond opposing unhelpful, unwarranted, and imbalanced action in multilateral bodies. They include a host of positive steps designed to support Israel's legitimate desire to play a larger role globally and multilaterally, including at the UN. In that context, we are working closely with Israel and other UN member states to support the appointment of Israelis to important UN positions, and are working diligently to normalize Israel's status in multilateral bodies, including joining the OECD and removing some of the discriminatory barriers to Israel's participation in UN voting and consultative blocs.

These efforts must and will be sustained, in partnership with Israel and other, likeminded states. Ultimately, the UN and other multilateral fora are indispensable as we seek to influence and encourage lasting reform and democratic change in Israel's neighborhood, and as we respond to the shared threats and challenges of our time.

One of those shared threats remains terrorism, and last week the UN Security Council took important new action to strengthen the international sanctions regime against terrorists. UNSC [Resolutions 1988 and 1989](#) divide the previous regime as defined by Resolution 1267. Resolution 1988 creates a new Afghanistan sanctions regime to target threats to Afghanistan's stability, establishes specific criteria for having the sanctions removed, and continues to ensure fair procedures exist for listed individuals. Resolution 1989 focuses

the 1267 regime exclusively on the threat from al-Qaida, expands the mandate of the 1267 Ombudsperson, and improves the fairness and transparency of how the sanctions are applied.

The strong support for these resolutions is a tangible sign of support by the international community for Afghan reconciliation efforts, and reaffirms the international community's commitment to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaida.

I'd also like to highlight further evidence of progress and promise at the UN Human Rights Council. While we still face challenges at the Council, particularly regarding its treatment of issues relating to Israel, during its June session the Council took several important actions that remind us that the U.S. voice on the Council remains crucial.

First, and perhaps most notably, on June 17 the Council took bold action to highlight violence and human rights abuses faced by [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender](#) (LGBT) persons around the world. This is the first UN resolution solely focused on the rights of LGBT persons. The United States co-sponsored and worked assiduously to support this initiative, which was introduced by South Africa. The resolution calls for a report on the challenges faced by LGBT people around the world, and will pave the way for sustained Council attention to LGBT issues in sessions to come.



Ambassador Donahoe responds to the press following her statement in support of historic resolution for protection of human rights of LGBT. Photo: Eric Bridiers / U.S. Mission Geneva

In addition to this important step on LGBT issues, the Council also deepened and broadened its [engagement on country situations](#). On Syria, for example, the United States joined over fifty UN members to deliver a forceful joint statement addressing that nation's deteriorating human rights situation, calling for an end to the on-going human rights violations committed by the Syrian authorities, and urging the Government of Syria to allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Office access to Syria to conduct their fact-finding mission.

The Council also applied its continuing focus to the human rights situations in Yemen, Libya, Cote d'Ivoire, Iran, Belarus, Somalia, and Kyrgyzstan. The Council also welcomed the groundbreaking work of the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Business and Human Rights, Professor John Ruggie. This work, which spanned more than five years, yielded the [Guiding Principles](#), a set of guidelines designed to define and promote corporate human rights responsibility, including means of redress when violations occur. The Council's resolution creates a working group and establishes a forum on business and human rights to discuss trends and challenges in implementing the Guiding Principles.

Your thoughts on the Principles, U.S. engagement at the Human Rights Council, or any matter related to U.S. engagement with the multilateral world are always welcome and appreciated.

With Regards,

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