

U.S. right to quit human rights panel

The cabal of renegade countries spends most of its time attacking America, Israel



Ted R. Bromund

The UN Human Rights Council is a disgrace. No democracy should listen to the council, much less participate in it. The Trump administration's decision to quit this rotten body was not merely right. It embodies the way we should treat failed international institutions.

Criticism of the council often begins with its record on Israel. There is a good reason for this: The council spends a wildly disproportionate share of its time on Israel.

As of the end of May, the council had adopted 169 condemnatory resolutions on countries. Of those, nearly half (47 percent) focused on Israel. There is no way that the human rights

situation in Israel is as bad as it is North Korea, Iran, Russia, Zimbabwe, and all the world's other autocracies put together.

But this is not just about Israel. The council's membership is terrible. Freedom House deems 14 of its 47 members be "not free." Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Cuba should not sit in judgment on the human rights records of other nations.

Predictably, the council also focuses disproportionately on the United States. The council has never condemned China. The country that has received the most recommendations for improvement is — of course — the United States.

It is not easy to find anyone who defends the council as it is. The most common criticism of the administration's decision, as Rob Berschinski at Human Rights First puts it, is:

"Countries like China, Russia and Venezuela will applaud this decision because we are freely giving up leverage over them that we previously had."

The obvious response to this argument is that, given the council's membership and record, U.S. leverage through the council has not been worth much. But there are deeper issues here.

A common argument raised in favor of U.S. membership of international organizations is that the United States brings prestige that will lead other nations to respect the organizations. This is often described as the argument for American leadership.

But if the United States brings prestige to what are purportedly good organizations, why does the same argument not apply to bad ones? If we take this argument seriously, we have to conclude that, by remaining in the council, the United States is lending prestige to it. Why should we do that?

Moreover, quitting an inter-

national organization can be a constructive step. When the United States quit Interpol in 1950, it led the organization to write a new constitution that forbids Interpol from involvement in political, racial or religious persecution.

Interpol today is far from perfect. But that constitution makes it possible to hold Interpol to account, and makes it clear that politicized abuse of Interpol is against the rules. If the United States had not quit Interpol in 1950, the organization likely would have been swamped by abuse and died.

Defenders of failed international organizations do those organizations an enormous disservice by refusing to hold them to real standards. If you have real standards, you will find that, on occasion, the only way to uphold them is to walk out, which is what the United States has done.

By refusing to walk out, liberals are not protecting the international order they purportedly cherish. They are

ensuring that abuse of it received their tacit support, and embracing an unthinking defense of the status quo not because it works, but merely because it exists.

There is a simple standard by which the United States should judge every international organization. If it works without bias, compatibly with the Constitution, with professionalism, and practically advances aims or values that are in the U.S. interest, it deserves our support. If not, it doesn't.

The Human Rights Council does few, if any, of these things. We have tried to remedy its biases from the inside. Leaving now is a way to demonstrate our support for values enshrined in the council's name — values that it reliably traduces in practice.

Ted R. Bromund is a senior research fellow in The Heritage Foundation's Thatcher Center for Freedom.

EXPRESSWAY

Just look what our net dragged in

BY DAN KRIESBERG

Several years ago, when my sons, Zack and Scott, were in their wonder-filled pre-teen years, seine fishing entered our lives.

Pretty much every day we pulled a red wagon to the beach at the end of our block in Bayville. The wagon overflowed with buckets, shovels, a Wiffle ball, bats, goggles, a football and our net.

The inspiration and instructions came from Zack. He had learned about seining in a Waterfront Center program in Oyster Bay.

In waist-deep water, we stretched out the net to its full 8-foot width and dragged it parallel to shore. We angled it to scoop up whatever swam or crawled. Zack taught us the key: Keep the lower edge on the bottom so creatures could not escape. Quickly we learned that the lower the tide, the better.

In the murky water, we couldn't see what we had



Dan Kriesberg, nephew Alex Mims and son Zack Kriesberg, from left, drag a seine in Long Island Sound in Bayville in 2010.

caught. It was a mystery. Our anticipation overflowed. After about 15 yards, we would make a quick turn and pull the net ashore. Water drained out and revealed the surprises. We never came up empty. There was more life in Long Island Sound than I ever imagined.

Hermit crabs, lady crabs, spider crabs, flounder, puffer fish, pipe fish, killies, silversides, mummichog and glass shrimp all squirmed and wiggled in the net. The boys worked fast. They raced back and forth about 25 yards from the net to the bucket on the

shore, cradling each treasured creature in their hands.

When the net was empty, out we went again. Scott loved the puffer fish, which expanded to three times their original size. Older brother Zack searched for baby flounders that would grow into the fish he hoped to someday catch with a pole.

In August, Alex and Sydney, their younger cousins from Texas, came to visit, and in the first afternoon, we showed them how the seine worked.

It was a good day; we pulled out quite an assortment of creatures, all of which went into a big tub that became their aquarium for perhaps an hour. Screams of excitement greeted each discovery. There was a direct correlation between the pitch of the shriek and the uniqueness of the animal.

An assortment of people stopped to watch and marvel at the catch. As Zack and Scott netted more creatures, the cousins were in charge of

refreshing the water to keep the animals cool and comfortable. They were also the police, ready to stop anyone who tried grabbing the fish.

All of them were proud to show off their catch. By late afternoon, with everyone getting tired and hungry, it was time to quit. The cousins carried the bucket to the water's edge and gently dumped the creatures back in.

We all enjoyed meeting some of our seaside neighbors — even the slimy, wiggly, jumpy ones that can pinch you.



Reader Dan Kriesberg lives in Bayville.

SEND AN ESSAY about life on Long Island (about 550 words) to expressway@newsday.com, or to Expressway/Opinion Dept., Newsday, 235 Pinelawn Road, Melville, NY 11747. Essays will be edited and may be republished in all media.