

Standing with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley slammed Russia, China, Cuba and Egypt for thwarting American efforts to reform the council.

She also criticised countries which shared US values and encouraged Washington to remain but “were unwilling to seriously challenge the status quo”.

The United States is halfway through a three-year term on the main UN rights body and the Trump administration had long threatened to quit if the 47-member Geneva-based body was not overhauled.

Ms Haley also said the “disproportionate focus and unending hostility toward Israel is clear proof that the council is motivated by political bias, not by human rights”.

Washington’s withdrawal is the latest US rejection of multilateral engagement after it pulled out of the Paris climate agreement and the 2015 [Iran nuclear deal](#).

It also comes as the United States faces intense criticism for detaining children separated from their immigrant parents at the US-Mexico border.

UN high commissioner for human rights Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein on Monday called on Washington to halt its “unconscionable” policy.

Rights groups have criticised the Trump administration for not making human rights a priority in its foreign policy.

Critics say this sends a message that the administration turns a blind eye to human rights abuses in some parts of the world.

Diplomats have said the US withdrawal from the body could bolster countries such as Cuba, Russia, Egypt and Pakistan, which resist what they see as UN interference in sovereign issues.

## 'Not a retreat from our commitments': Haley

Among reforms, the United States had been seeking ways to make it easier to kick out a member state with egregious rights records.

Ms Haley said the US withdrawal from the Human Rights Council "is not a retreat from our human rights commitments".

Twelve rights and aids groups, including Human Rights First, Save the Children and CARE, wrote to Mr Pompeo to warn the withdrawal would "make it more difficult to advance human rights priorities and aid victims of abuse around the world".

"The US's absence will only compound the council's weaknesses," they wrote.

Jamil Dakwar, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Human Rights Program, said Mr [Trump](#)'s "misguided policy of isolationism only harms American interests and betrays our values as a nation".

Jewish rights group the Simon Wiesenthal Center applauded the US withdrawal and urged other countries to do the same.

The council meets three times a year to examine human rights violations worldwide.

It has mandated independent investigators to look at situations including Syria, North Korea, Myanmar and South Sudan.

Its resolutions are not legally binding but carry moral authority.

**Source: ABC, UNHRC**

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