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H.E. Nikki R. Haley
Permanent Representative
United States Mission to the United Nations
799 United Nations Plaza

21 June 2018

Dear Ambassador Haley,

Thank you for your letter of 20 June 2018 explaining the United States' reasoning for withdrawing from the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council. While we regret your decision – and hope that the United States will reconsider its position – we welcome the opportunity to respond.

As the main UN body on human rights, the Council has been responsive to crises and situations of chronic human suffering – including setting up investigative teams to look into abuses in Myanmar, Syria and Yemen. More than that, it allows victims and survivors of violations to take comfort in the knowledge that what happened to them will not be forgotten.

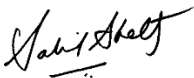
However, as you have pointed out, the Council is not without its flaws, just like the UN Security Council and other bodies of which the USA remains a member. Amnesty International firmly believes the way to tackle the range of issues facing the Council is for states to provide strong and principled leadership to enable it to promote and protect human rights effectively.

It is unfortunate that rather than engage in reforming the Council from within, where you could make a difference, the United States instead chose to make a grand exit while attacking the credibility of the very institution it has helped strengthen in the past.

To make cooperation with non-governmental organizations conditional on their alignment to the United States' policies and views contradicts the values that the United States has traditionally espoused at the UN. Engaging only with those who agree with you would surely leave you with an ever-shrinking group of people to talk to.

There have been many times when the United States has been a strong ally on human rights issues. We look forward to co-operating with its government and officials as we have done for decades, with the understanding that our differences should not deviate from our common efforts toward achieving the higher aim of preventing atrocities, protecting all human rights, and fulfilling humanity's aspirations for secure livelihoods and for freedom.

Yours sincerely,



Salil Shetty
Secretary General

ANNEX



THE REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO THE
UNITED NATIONS

June 20, 2018

Dear Amnesty International,

Last June, I traveled to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva and made very clear that continued United States participation on the Council depended on adoption of meaningful reforms in two specific areas: (1) improving the quality of Council membership; and (2) removing the anti-Israel bias from the Council's agenda. Since then, Human Rights Council reform has been a high Administration priority within the United Nations.

After co-hosting a High Level Week event on Council reform last September, attended by more than 40 Member States, we met with more than 125 Member States in bilateral and multilateral meetings to discuss the importance of Council reform. We discovered near universal agreement on the need for dramatic and systemic Council reforms and sought to put those shared goals into action.

Last month, our Mission circulated a draft Human Rights Council Strengthening Resolution to a small group of Member States for edits. To this date, we have received not one written edit from a single Member State. In fact, the only written responses disseminated to Member States have been démarches from Russia and China, as well as your joint letter, all requesting the exact same thing—that Member States oppose our resolution and not engage on the text.

It is unfortunate that your letter sought to undermine our attempts to improve the Human Rights Council. You put yourself on the side of Russia and China, and opposite the United States, on a key human rights issue.

You should know that your efforts to block negotiations and thwart reform were a contributing factor in the U.S. decision to withdraw from the Council. Going forward, we encourage you to play a constructive role on behalf of human rights, rather than the deconstructive one you played in this instance.

In no way does our withdrawal from a dysfunctional human rights body constitute a withdrawal from America's fight for human rights. The United States will continue to be a world leader in calling for human rights for all people and in forcing international attention onto mass atrocities. We are happy to work together with NGOs that share those goals but not with ones that undermine them.

My very best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nikki R. Haley".
Nikki R. Haley