

AP Breaking News

U.N. Body to Review Alleged Israel Abuses

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The new U.N. Human Rights Council voted Friday to dedicate time during each future session to a review of alleged human rights abuses by Israel — a move criticized by the United States as misguided and unfair.

The resolution, which was sponsored by Islamic countries, was passed by a vote of 29-12, with five abstentions. It effectively revives a practice of the U.N.'s dissolved Human Rights Commission, which also reviewed alleged Israeli abuses every time it met.

Israel protested Friday's vote, calling it a perpetuation of "the old infamous habits" of the widely discredited commission.

The Human Rights Council also announced it would hold a special session next week. That session, which also will inevitably focus on Israel, was called because 21 countries — more than the requisite one-third — signed a request to invoke the meeting.

Mexican diplomat Luis Alfonso de Alba, who chairs the 47-member council, said there were conflicts with other meetings at the United Nations' European headquarters next week, but that "we are even considering lunchtime hours" to hold the session as soon as possible.

The resolution approved requires U.N. investigators to report at each council session "on the Israeli human rights violations in occupied Palestine."

One of the United States' main criticisms of the Human Rights Commission, replaced this year by the new council, was that it spent a great deal of time criticizing Israel.

"Voting in favor of this draft resolution will lead you directly to the old infamous habits of the commission," Israeli Ambassador Itzhak Levanon told the council. "Voting 'yes' essentially means that no lessons have been drawn. It means that there is no fresh beginning."

Canada and European Union members on the council voted against the resolution.



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The United States is not a member of the council and, like Israel, was unable to vote. But Ambassador Warren W. Tichenor, who heads the U.S. observer delegation, expressed disappointment.

"At this first meeting, an historic opportunity has been lost," Tichenor said. "Rather than address a number of urgent human rights situations around the world in a fair, equitable and balanced way, this new Human Rights Council has instead pursued an unbalanced agenda to single out and focus on Israel alone."

However, he said, "the United States is still committed to working to ensure that the Human Rights Council is as effective and efficient as it can be."

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