

Senators Urge US to Halt UN Probe into Alleged War Crimes During Gaza Bombing

Sixty-eight senators signed a letter sent to Biden administration saying UN investigation is part of 'continuing bias against Israel'

By [Middle East Eye](#)

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A bipartisan group of 68 [US](#) senators sent a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, calling on the Biden administration to lead an effort to end a United Nations commission that is probing alleged [Israeli](#) war crimes against [Palestinians](#).

The lawmakers, led by Democratic Senator Ben Cardin and Republican Rob Portman, said that the investigation, which was announced following Israel’s bombing of Gaza last May, is a part of “continuing bias against Israel” and is taking up a “disproportionate use of resources in an ongoing campaign to disparage, discredit and denounce Israel”.

It follows a [similar effort](#) made by House lawmakers in January.

“An important step in this regard would be to redirect the wasteful use of funds and personnel on excessive devotion to disparaging Israel to allow the UN Human Rights Council to fairly promote human rights around the world,” said the [letter](#) sent on Monday.

“We write to urge you to prioritize reversing the UN Human Rights Council’s discriminatory and unwarranted treatment of Israel by leading a multinational effort in the Council and in the UN to end the permanent Commission of Inquiry on the Israeli Palestinian conflict.”

Last year, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) agreed to [launch an investigation](#) with a broad mandate to probe all alleged violations Israel had committed against Palestinians following its May offensive on Gaza, which killed 260 Palestinians, including 66 children, [according](#) to the UN.

The investigators, who have been tasked with trying to identify those responsible for violations and ensure they are held accountable, are due to present their first report in June.

The senators went on to write that the commission “will also have a carte blanche mandate – in perpetuity – to examine any period in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict about violations not only in the West Bank and Gaza, but also within Israel’s pre-1967 borders”.

“By unfairly singling out Israel, the UNHRC undermines its credibility to investigate human rights violations around the world,” they continued.

The US rejoined the UNHRC in February 2021 after former President Donald Trump withdrew from the organisation, claiming that it had a bias against Israel. Even after rejoining it, the Biden administration has said the council is “flawed” in its criticism of Israel.

Meanwhile, Israel has stated it will not cooperate with the UN on the investigation, with officials [reportedly concerned](#) that the results will say that Israel is an apartheid state.

Several international human rights organisations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have already labelled Israel as being guilty of apartheid, and a UN special rapporteur already submitted a report with similar conclusions earlier this month.

Despite the increasing number of rights groups labelling Israeli policies as amounting to apartheid, the United States and Israel’s other western allies have refrained from making any such declarations.

The Human Rights Council was founded in 2006 with the aim of “strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights”, and consists of 47 countries elected to three-year terms by the UN General Assembly with quotas allocated to each continent.

It has been criticised for the election of members with poor human rights records. But while pro-Israel lawmakers in the US complain that the council unfairly targets Israel, only a fraction of its resolutions in 2020 focused on the Israeli government.

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Featured image: Smoke rises after Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City, the Gaza Strip, Palestine, Wednesday, May 12, 2021. (Nick_Raille_07 / Shutterstock.com).

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