



# Rhetoric and reality: on the UNHRC and human rights

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Highlights

Why in news?

- The withdrawal of the U.S. from the Human Rights Council (HRC) of the United Nations in June this year sent shock waves through the international community, foreign-policy think-tanks and human rights non-governmental organisations.
- However, some feel this was the right decision and are now advocating withdrawal by other countries; this includes those in India.

Criticism against the body

- Ineffective- it has largely been ineffective because of the nature of the UN ,The UN system entails that every country can become a member even the perpetrators of Human rights
- Criticism is alleged to be politically determined- In case of Israel it has been alleged that regional grouping played a role in condemnation of acts of Israel
- Not all encompassing- Another aspect overseen by the HRC is the appointment of special rapporteurs — independent mandate holders — on issues including internal displacement, torture, racial discrimination, as well as country specific mandates.

Why US left UNHRC?

- The factor that precipitated its withdrawal is the alleged targeting of Israel by the HRC. However, the background to this is also one of impatience and a failure to stay the course on an important multilateral process — that of HRC reform.
- Discussions and reform proposals are already in the works, with engagement by states and human rights organisations indicating a consensus building approach.
- However, while ostensibly committing to reform, the impatience of the current U.S. administration and its disdain for multilateralism has resulted in the impetuous decision to withdraw.

Importance of UNHRC

- By ceding a role at the HRC, a state reduces its ability to influence the agenda, and if it is so inclined, a genuine engagement in the monitoring of human rights. Invoking sovereignty as the basis to disengage is specious at best and malafide at worst.

Source: The Hindu