

# *Russia welcomes U.S. withdrawal from UNHRC, says council can work better now*

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Geneva, June 21 (RHC)-- Russia has welcomed the United States' pullout from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), saying the body has lost nothing and can operate more freely now. "I cannot say that the council lost anything," Russia's permanent representative at the UN office and other international organizations in Geneva, Gennady Gatilov, told reporters.

"Moreover, I hope that in the wake of the United States' walkout there will be less politicization, double standards and confrontation," he added. The comments came a day after U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced Washington's withdrawal over what they called the body's entrenched bias against Israel.

The U.S. administration has long pressured the UNHRC to end its scrutiny of Israel's widespread human rights abuses against Palestinians. In May, UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein said Israel has systematically deprived Palestinians of their human rights, with 1.9 million in Gaza "caged in a toxic slum from birth to death."

Scores of Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli forces in Gaza since March 30, when they began

protests for their right to return to their homelands in the occupied territories.

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova also reacted to the U.S. pullout on Wednesday and said it only confirmed Washington's long-running double standards. "Our U.S. counterparts have shown boorish cynicism - they are reluctant to admit that they have human rights issues themselves but at the same time, they continue attempts to reshape the council to make it serve their needs, stressing that there was no place for persistent violators of human rights in the council," Zakharova pointed out.

Calling it a "mistake," she said the decision only "dealt a powerful blow" to Washington's own claims of human rights protection reputation.

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