

Abusive Governments Set to Win Rights Council Seats

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[Egypt](#) and [Vietnam](#) are on track to secure seats on the [United Nations Human Rights Council](#) despite being woefully unfit for membership, Human Rights Watch said today. The UN General Assembly will elect members to the UN's premier rights body in a noncompetitive vote on October 14, 2025.

The 2 countries are among [14 member states](#) seeking three-year terms on the [47-nation Human Rights Council](#) starting in January 2026. Vietnam, currently a Council member, is seeking re-election.

"Noncompetitive UN votes permit abusive governments like Egypt and Vietnam to become Human Rights Council members, threatening to make a mockery of the Council," said [Louis Charbonneau](#), UN director at Human Rights Watch. "UN member states should stop handing Council seats on a silver platter to serial rights violators."

Egypt, along with [Angola](#), [Mauritius](#), and [South Africa](#) are running for four African seats. [India](#), [Iraq](#), and [Pakistan](#) are joining Vietnam for the four Asian seats. For Latin America and the Caribbean, [Chile](#), and [Ecuador](#) are unopposed for two seats. In the Western group, [Italy](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) are running for two available seats, while [Estonia](#) and [Slovenia](#) are candidates for two seats for Central and Eastern Europe.

General Assembly [Resolution 60/251](#), which created the Human Rights Council in 2006, urges states voting for members to "take into account the contribution of candidates to the promotion and protection of human rights." Council members are required to "uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights" at home and abroad and to "fully cooperate with the Council."

Candidates only need a simple majority in the secret-ballot vote in the 193-nation General Assembly to secure a seat on the Human Rights Council. That makes it highly unlikely that any of the candidates will not be elected. Nevertheless, UN member states should not cast votes for abusive governments that are demonstrably unqualified for Council membership.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's [government](#) has continued [wholesale repression](#), systematically detaining and punishing peaceful critics and activists, and [effectively criminalizing](#) peaceful dissent. Government security forces have committed serious human rights abuses with near-absolute impunity. These include [killing hundreds of largely peaceful protesters](#) and [widespread, systematic torture of detainees](#), which most likely amount to crimes against humanity. The government also tries to [prevent its own citizens](#) from engaging with the Geneva-based Human Rights Council, and [punishes](#) those who engage with brutal reprisals. It ignores UN experts' requests to visit the country.

The ruling [Communist Party of Vietnam](#) maintains a monopoly on political power and allows no challenge to its leadership. Basic rights are severely restricted, including freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and religion. [Rights activists and bloggers](#) face police intimidation, harassment, restricted movement, and arbitrary arrest and detention.

Mauritius and the UK, among the countries running, signed a [treaty](#) that recognizes Mauritius' sovereignty over the [Chagos islands](#) but fails to address the ongoing crimes against humanity against Chagossians and their right of return to all the islands. The UK forcibly displaced the Chagossian people [between 1965 and 1973](#) to allow the US to build a military base. Mauritius and the UK should comply with their international rights obligations, including Chagossians' right of return and should provide an effective remedy and reparations.

Angolan President João Lourenço has pledged to protect human rights, though Angolan security forces have used [excessive force](#) against political activists and peaceful protesters. South Africa has taken strong stances for accountability on [Palestine](#) and other issues. It should be similarly robust with rights violations by Russia and China.

The Bharatiya Janata Party government in India led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has refused access to UN experts. Modi's party leaders and supporters [repeatedly vilify and attack](#) Muslims and Christians with impunity, while the authorities often punish those who protest this campaign of Hindu majoritarianism.

Pakistan should cease the use of draconian counterterrorism and sedition laws to intimidate peaceful critics, and repeal its [blasphemy laws](#). The government should prosecute those responsible for

incitement and attacks on minorities and marginalized communities.

In 2024, Iraq passed a law [criminalizing](#) same-sex relations and transgender expression. [Violence and discrimination](#) against LGBT people are rampant, for which no one is held to account. Iraqi authorities have increasingly repressed activists and journalists.

In Ecuador, the government has attacked judicial independence and security forces have committed serious human rights violations since President Daniel Noboa declared an ["internal armed conflict"](#) in January 2024. In Chile, President Gabriel Boric's administration has played a leading role in [speaking out](#) on human rights violations around the world. Human rights challenges, including [racism and abuses against migrants](#), remain a problem in the country, however.

In the [UK](#), the authorities should end their crackdown on freedom of assembly. Many peaceful [protesters](#) in support of Palestinians or action on climate change have been arrested and some imprisoned after demonstrating. Italy should [stop](#) criminalizing and obstructing sea rescues and enabling Libyan forces to intercept migrants and refugees and take them back to Libya, where they face arbitrary detention and grave abuses. Italy also [failed to comply](#) with a 2025 International Criminal Court arrest warrant by sending a wanted suspect back to Libya instead of to The Hague.

The Human Rights Council has played a crucial role in investigating abuses in [Syria](#), [Myanmar](#), [North Korea](#), [Russia](#), [Ukraine](#), [Israel/Palestine](#), and elsewhere. It recently established an investigation into serious crimes in [Afghanistan](#) by all parties—past and present—and extended its [fact-finding mission for Sudan](#). Other countries and situations need scrutiny. Council members should press for investigations of abuses by major powers, such as [China's](#) crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and others in [Xinjiang](#), and take up [extrajudicial killings](#) by the US of alleged narcotics traffickers on sea vessels.

For Council investigations to be credible, it needs financing. It is critical for countries to pay their assessed UN dues while boosting voluntary contributions. This will ensure that independent human rights investigations [do not become casualties](#) of the UN's financial crisis resulting from the Trump administration [halting virtually all payments](#) to the UN and China and others paying late.

"The Human Rights Council has been able to save countless lives by carrying out numerous human rights investigations that deter governments and armed groups from committing abuses," Charbonneau said. "All governments should recognize that it's in their interests to promptly pay their UN dues so the rights Council can do its job."

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