

Saving the UN:

**Freeing Resources From
Wasteful Anti-Israel Spending**

A report by the World Jewish Congress

About the World Jewish Congress

The World Jewish Congress (WJC), representing Jewish communities and organizations in more than 100 countries around the world, advocates on their behalf towards governments, parliaments, international organizations, and other faiths. The WJC represents the plurality of the Jewish people and is politically non-partisan. As the “Diplomatic Arm of the Jewish People,” the WJC has been active in countless campaigns since its inception: advocating for justice for Holocaust victims and their heirs and protecting the memory of the Holocaust; obtaining restitution of, or compensation for, stolen Jewish property; countering antisemitism and delegitimization of the State of Israel, as well as the denial of Jewish right to self-determination; and engaging in dialogue with other faith-based organizations, but most of all, the protection and fostering of Jewish minority communities around the world. The WJC has had a Special Consultative status to ECOSOC since 1947, among the first NGOs to do so.

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Introduction

The United Nations is currently operating under severe financial strain. UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned recently that the United Nations faces a “race to bankruptcy” unless Member States pay their dues in full and on time.¹ The UN has responded with the UN80 initiative, an “ambitious, system-wide reform effort” to make the organization “more agile, integrated, and equipped to respond to today’s complex global challenges amid tightening resources.”² Budget cuts, staff reductions and relocations are among the cost-saving measures currently implemented. Against this backdrop of structural underfunding, the UN has pledged to rationalize its work, avoid duplications and mainstream its operations. On the occasion of the opening of the March 2026 session of the UN Human Rights Council, this report will examine how Geneva-based UN bodies and agencies are addressing this challenge, focusing on the wide matrix of Palestine-related resolutions, reports and mandates.

Several Geneva-based UN bodies and agencies, including the Human Rights Council (UNHRC), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and specialized organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO), the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Health Organization (WHO) continue to sustain a dense and resource-heavy architecture of mechanisms devoted almost exclusively to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These include a standing UNHRC agenda item, recurring resolutions and reports, an open-ended Commission of Inquiry, the mandate of a Special Rapporteur “on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967,” the UN Database of Business Enterprises, and ILO, UNCTAD, and WHO reporting.

Notably, several of these mechanisms were established prior to the General Assembly’s recognition of the “State of Palestine,” originally to support what was then referred to as the “Palestinian cause.” This now results in a situation where a non-member observer state benefits from a unique network of UN mechanisms and resources that provide a level of dedicated attention and support not afforded to any other context or member state. The scale of these recurrent expenditures, combined with the absence of comparable architectures for other protracted or

¹ [UN faces ‘race to bankruptcy’ as Guterres unveils sharply reduced 2026 budget | The United Nations Office at Geneva](#) and [UN risks ‘imminent financial collapse’, secretary general warns.](#)

² [Home | UN80 Initiative.](#)

acute human rights situations, raises serious questions about the principled, needs-based and unbiased allocation of resources within the UN system.

This report examines, on the basis of publicly available UN budget documents, Secretariat cost data and programme-budget implications, the extent to which the UN's Israel-related mechanisms consume disproportionate resources in a time of financial crisis.³ It also identifies areas of duplication across Geneva, analyses their cumulative financial impact, and proposes reforms aimed at ensuring a more equitable, needs-based and sustainable use of human and financial resources across the human rights system. While researching for this report, it was very difficult to find exact numbers for particular costs, so the numbers provided in the report are often an approximation. If one adds time spent by senior staff, including for review, clearance and oversight of the described activities, as well as press reporting and relations it becomes clear that the real costs are much higher and the numbers provided in this report an underestimate.

Agenda Item 7

When the UN Human Rights Council was established by UN General Assembly Resolution 60/251 in 2006, the reform was presented as a vital opportunity to move past the selectivity of the former Commission on Human Rights and ensure a more universal approach to global oversight. However, during the 2007 'Institution-Building' phase, the Council adopted a permanent agenda that included Agenda Item 7, entitled "Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories."

Agenda Item 7 debates take place during all three formal UNHRC sessions throughout the year (March, June, September) and typically occupy several hours on the Council's program of work. This entails significant financial costs and therefore consumes a meaningful share of regular budget resources. Conference servicing for Council proceedings, including interpretation in six official languages, documentation processing and broadcasting via UN Web TV, is resource intensive. These expenditures draw from the same limited pool of funds needed to support responses to urgent human rights situations.

According to estimates, a full day of UNHRC meetings costs approximately CHF 100,000 or \$125,000.⁴ In 2025, agenda item 7 took 6,5 hours of UNHRC time (58th

³ All amounts are in US Dollars (USD/\$).

⁴ [The Human Rights Council Opens Amid More Budget Cuts - PassBlue.](#)

session: 3 hours, 59th session: 2 hours, 60th session: 1,5 hours). This is the equivalent of one full day of UNHRC meetings and at a cost of \$125,000.

Item 7 hours

58th session (March 2025)	3 hours
59th session (June 2025)	2 hours
60th session (September 2025)	1,5 hours

Source: UN WebTV

Apart from the regular debate around item 7, three resolutions are tabled under this item each year, with an additional one criticizing Israel under item 2, more than any other UN member state. The preparation of these resolutions and the voting process necessitate extra budgetary needs for UN staff, in document editing, conference servicing, interpretation and related costs.

Special Rapporteur “on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967”

The mandate of the Special Rapporteur “on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967” is a country specific Special Procedures mandate tasked with monitoring, reporting and advising on the human rights situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The mandate was established in 1993 by the former Commission on Human Rights and has remained in place ever since. Unlike most country specific mandates, which are created for a defined period and regularly reviewed by Member States, this mandate has no meaningful reviewing cycle, despite significant changes in the broader institutional landscape and the creation of additional, overlapping mechanisms addressing the same file.

Since 2022, the mandate has been held by Francesca Albanese. Her tenure has attracted criticism from a number of Member States, which argue that her public

statements insufficiently reflect the complexity of the conflict, ignore the crimes of Hamas and promote antisemitic tropes.⁵

While the UN does not publish standalone budget figures individual Special Procedures mandates, the UNHRC's Programme Budget Implication process offers a useful proxy for estimating their resource footprint. For example, at the Council's 53rd session, the resolution extending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions carried a Programme Budget Implication of \$777,000, reflecting the additional resources anticipated for staffing, reporting and conference servicing. This provides a credible point of reference for the scale of costs that Special Procedures can generate. In practice, a country-specific mandate typically requires dedicated OHCHR staffing at the professional level, support from general service personnel, country visits, travel linked to annual presentations in Geneva and New York, and the full suite of documentation, translation and meeting services associated with the preparation and discussion of reports. Taken together, these elements place the annual cost of country-specific mandate in the high hundreds of thousands of dollars. Although such mandates are renewed on an annual basis, repeated renewals over time result in a sustained and cumulative budgetary commitment.

It is important to note that in addition to this country-specific mandate, other Special Rapporteurs spend a significant amount of time on this topic although they have a more universal mandate. Issues around the Israel-Palestine conflict is a constant focus of their thematic reports, statements and press releases. While it is difficult to quantify the hours spent, this emphasis has an important financial cost and clearly detracts from other urgent themes they should be exploring.

UN reports on the Israel-Palestinian conflict

Different UNHRC resolutions call for the UN secretariat to prepare reports on the human rights situation in the region, which are often biased, one-sided, and full of erroneous or misleading information. At the same time, the OHCHR produces its own thematic reports, without explicit mandate or instructions from the member-states.⁶

⁵ [World Jewish Congress President Lauder Calls for Removal of UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese - World Jewish Congress.](#)

⁶ For the most recent reports, [Israel's discriminatory administration of the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem | OHCHR](#) (January 2026) and [Ethnic cleansing concerns in Gaza and West Bank amid intensified violence and forcible transfers by Israel - UN report | OHCHR](#) (February 2026).

Each report requires several months of dedicated staff time, typically involving at least one professional officer supported by general service staff. Once drafting is completed, the report must be translated into the six official UN languages, edited, formatted and prepared for publication, all of which draw on conference servicing and Secretariat resources. The drafting of 15–20-page reports can cost between \$7,500 to \$22,000.⁷ This does not include the cost needed to collect information, data, testimonies, submissions, etc and neither translation costs, which can bring the total number much higher.

Because of multiple Israel-related reports each year, often covering overlapping themes, the cumulative cost becomes significant. If we assume around 5-7 such UN reports a year, that could very well mean a cost of upwards of \$100,000. In today's financial environment, maintaining parallel reporting streams on a single situation creates a recurrent resource commitment that limits the system's ability to redirect funds to urgent global priorities.

Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel

The “Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel” is unique within the UNHRC system for both its unprecedented scope and its open-ended mandate. Unlike other commissions established for finite periods to examine specific crises, it operates indefinitely and focuses exclusively on a single country situation. This exceptional structure raises concerns regarding balance, selectivity, and consistency with the Council’s principles of universality and impartiality. According to the Secretary-General’s budget submission approved by the General Assembly, the Commission remains among the UNHRC’s most resource-intensive mechanisms, with an annual regular budget of approximately \$4.15 million covering eighteen posts, including senior investigators, legal officers, analysts, and administrative staff.⁸

Because the mandate is open ended, these costs recur each year and have no built-in sunset point. Over a three-year period, the direct appropriation alone therefore exceeds \$12 million, before accounting for the additional system wide costs triggered by the mechanism’s output, including the translation, processing,

⁷ [Budgetary implications of UNFCCC mandates: update on standard costs. Note by the Executive Secretary, Part D15, a and b.](#)

⁸ [\\$100 million spent on anti-Israel efforts yearly at UN, says Israeli envoy Danon - JNS.org.](#)

and publication of lengthy reports and the conference services required when the Commission formally presents its findings in Geneva and New York.

UNHRC Database of Business Enterprises

The UN Human Rights Council established a specific oversight mechanism known as the UN Database of business enterprises. Created in 2016 through Resolution 31/36, this mechanism was designed to monitor and list private companies operating within Israeli-controlled territories in the West Bank. While the resolution initially carried a Program Budget Implications (PBI) of \$138,700 for its setup, the database has evolved into a permanent fixture of the UN human rights pillar.

The latest report, issued in 2025 (A/HRC/60/19), confirms that the mechanism continues to generate recurrent costs within the UN system and annual updates are foreseen. These costs cover the salaries and associated expenses of four OHCHR staff members responsible for investigating, compiling the information and could amount to upwards from \$500,000.⁹

Specialized Agencies

Several specialized agencies of the United Nations maintain recurring workstreams devoted specifically to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, each of which carries its own staffing and documentation implications. Although these activities are embedded within broader program budgets and therefore not costed as stand-alone items, they nonetheless represent an additional layer of institutional attention directed at the same situation.

At the World Health Organization’s Assembly, two annual resolutions on health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, WHA 78/4 and 78(16),¹⁰ and additional resolutions from its Executive Board, require the Secretariat to prepare two dedicated reports and to support the debate at the World Health Assembly. This work involves contributions from technical teams in regional offices, staff time within the health-emergencies programme and the preparation of a document that must be edited, translated and circulated in the same manner as other Assembly reports.¹¹

⁹ [\\$100 million spent on anti-Israel efforts yearly at UN, says Israeli envoy Danon - JNS.org.](#)

¹⁰ [Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem](#) and [Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan.](#)

¹¹ [Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem](#) and [Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan.](#)

A similar pattern exists at the International Labour Organization. The ILO's yearly report on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories requires high-level missions, data collection and consultations in the field. The drafting, review and presentation of the report are funded from the ILO's regular budget for standards and fundamental principles, drawing on staff time that could otherwise support global priorities in labour rights and compliance.¹²

UNCTAD adds a further specialized component. Its ongoing analytical work on the economic impact of the occupation requires a dedicated team of economists and support staff. These studies must be researched, drafted, peer-reviewed and translated, again producing a cycle of documentation and conference-servicing demands that mirror those seen in Geneva.¹³

Taken together, they reinforce the broader pattern in which several UN entities, operating through different mandates and governing bodies, generate recurring and resource-intensive reporting on the same situation. The concentration of specialized reporting on this specific context stands in contrast to the far more limited analytical outputs produced for many other protracted crises, raising questions about balance and consistency in the allocation of agency resources. The underlying issue is not only financial. A system that dedicates this level of sustained attention and resources to one situation, while others with equally or more acute needs struggle to secure even basic levels of support, raises broader concerns about consistency and institutional balance.

Reform Proposals

Reform proposals must urgently address the UN's disproportionately resource-intensive architecture focused on Israel and the Palestinian territories, enabling reallocation to pressing global crises amid ongoing liquidity shortfalls. The aim of reform should not be to eliminate scrutiny, but to ensure that resources are allocated in a manner that is consistent with the principles of universality, proportionality and even-handedness that underpin the UN Charter and the UNHRC's own founding resolution. The reforms proposed below focus on feasibility, budgetary impact and institutional coherence.

¹² [The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories - Report of the ILO Director-General – Appendix - Question of Palestine.](#)

¹³ [UNCTAD Report: Economic costs of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people: the post-October 2023 shocks compounding the historical cumulative cost of the occupation of the West Bank \(A/80/356\) - Question of Palestine.](#)

1. Remove agenda item 7 from the UNHRC agenda

Agenda Item 7 obliges the Council to consider the situation in the Palestinian territories at every regular session. Integrating this discussion under the same agenda items used for all other country situations would streamline the programme of work and allow the Council to allocate its time according to need rather than political tradition. Such a change would streamline the situation in line with how the Council deals with the rest of the world, prevent costly duplication and support a more balanced allocation of meeting time in support of more urgent and grave situations.

2. Introduce periodic review mechanisms for existing mandates

Most country-specific mandates created by the UNHRC are subject to regular renewal, allowing states to assess both performance and continued relevance. The Special Rapporteur on Palestinian Territories is the only mandate that has not been reviewed since the inception of the Council, in violation of its founding resolution. Aligning this mandate with standard practice would allow states to evaluate its conduct, consider whether the substantive issues it covers are already addressed by other mechanisms and determine whether the mandate continues to serve a useful purpose. Extending periodic review to the Commission of Inquiry, which currently operates without a sunset clause, would introduce clarity about its duration and budgetary implications.

3. Streamlining UN Mechanisms

Reform proposals should prioritize consolidating overlapping reporting requirements. The Human Rights Council continues to adopt multiple resolutions, far exceeding 10 to 15 annually across bodies, on the same situation, generating repetitive and often one-sided OHCHR reports alongside parallel outputs from New York mechanisms like CEIRPP, the Division for Palestinian Rights, and the Special Committee, as well as Geneva's Commission of Inquiry, Special Rapporteur, and recurring settlements updates. This fragmented architecture, further amplified by the State of Palestine's advocacy across UN forums and meetings with repeated requests for amplification and additional reports, debates and services, produces limited credibility and practical value amid severe resource constraints. Rationalizing these mandates through closures, mergers into unified GA/HRC reports, and enhanced inter-site coordination would eliminate duplication, refocus on genuine human rights outcomes, balance resource use, and bolster UN credibility.

4. Publish consolidated cost reporting

At present, the financial burden of the UN's Israel-related architecture is spread across several departments and budget sections, making it difficult for member states to understand the full scale of the resource commitment. Requesting the UN Secretary-General to provide an annual consolidated cost overview would bring transparency to budgeting, allow states to assess duplication and ensure that the allocation of funds aligns with priority protection needs. This is consistent with broader UN reform objectives, including those outlined in the UN 2.0 and UN 80 frameworks.

Conclusion

In the current financial context, where vital UN staff are let go, treaty bodies are shortening sessions, reviews are being postponed and field presences are struggling to maintain essential operations, the maintenance of multiple overlapping mechanisms focused on one situation carries a clear opportunity cost and raises critical questions about proportionality, necessity, and the overall allocation of scarce resources across the human rights system. The existence of a multitude of mandates, reports, and permanent debates, with a one-sided focus, creates a multi-layered structure that demands several million dollars annually to sustain parallel investigations and analysis on the same geographic context.

Maintaining such a complex system necessitating a huge budget dedicated to one situation starkly contrasts with the limited resources available for other protracted crises and for treaty bodies, which have already curtailed their work due to chronic funding gaps. The report focused only on Geneva-based bodies. If one adds bodies and agencies in New York, Paris and elsewhere, the problem becomes even more serious and requires an urgent remedy.

These issues raise broader questions about whether the current structures, as currently set up and exercised, serve the integrity and effectiveness of the UN human rights system or reflects an imbalance that should be addressed as part of a wider reform process.