

# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

October 20, 2023

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

I write to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) undertake a review of United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures. According to the United Nations, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective. They are non-paid and elected for three-year mandates that can be renewed for another three years. As of October 2022, there are 45 thematic and 14 country mandates.

As the largest assessed and voluntary contributor to the United Nations, it is important that the United States has clarity over the activities and functions of these procedures. Therefore, I request that GAO review these special procedures to assess their progress and accomplishments. Specifically, I request that GAO address the following questions:

1. Please explain the methodology for establishing special procedures. What criteria does the United Nations use to choose special procedures? Are there circumstances that would disqualify or lead to dismissal of a special procedure? Has a special procedure holder been dismissed before? If so, please provide a list.
2. Please provide details as to how the United Nations manages and resolves conflicts of interest questions. For example, how does the United Nations identify any potential conflicts of interest? What measures are currently in place for considering potential conflicts of interest with respect to appointments of special procedures?
3. To ensure the ongoing integrity of the special procedure, are there periodic examinations or other kinds of review of special procedures to see if any conflicts of interest have arisen after the initial appointment?
4. Please provide a breakdown of the amount of U.S. foreign assistance obligated to special procedures over the last 10 years. In addition, what resources and other financial assistance have foreign countries provided? Please identify U.S. funding by account and agency. Please breakdown the assistance provided by year and by special procedure.

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5. How much financial assistance have countries other than the United States contributed to special procedures since the establishment of the United Nations Human Rights Council? Please breakdown the assistance provided by country, year, and special procedure.
6. What countries have been visited by the special procedures since the establishment of the United Nations Human Rights Council? How many times has each country been visited from each special procedure?
7. What is the breakdown of nationality of all special procedure holders since the establishment of the United Nations Human Rights Council?
8. Please provide details on any United Nations' budgetary rules or guidance limiting or forbidding the use of United Nations' resources for certain expenditures, particularly with respect to travel expenses and allowances.
9. What is the purpose of these special procedures and how are the goals and objectives of each mission developed? Are there identified metrics for success? Are these missions audited? If so, how many have been successful?
10. How are special procedures efforts different from, or complementary to, other Department of State and USAID projects?

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



JAMES E. RISCH  
Ranking Member  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee