

Testimony of Michèle Taylor  
Nominee to be Representative of the United States to the  
United Nations Human Rights Council  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to serve as the United States Representative to the United Nations Human Rights Council. Thank you also to Senator Kaine for his generous introduction. I am deeply honored to be here and grateful to the President and Secretary Blinken for their confidence and support.

I would like to thank my family for their love, faith, and unwavering encouragement. My two children and their partners, Zach and Raymond and Zoë and Christian, are a constant source of inspiration. Most importantly, I am thankful to my husband, Kenneth, who lifts me up at every opportunity. I am the proud daughter and granddaughter of Holocaust survivors and I know that my mother and her parents would be so proud to see me standing before you today.

Mr. Chairman, my family legacy is one of survival; I feel a responsibility to serve as a champion for everyone whose rights are threatened so that what happened to my mother's family does not happen to others. I am proud of my Jewish identity, and the rise of global antisemitism and anti-Israel bias have only made me more resolute to embrace it.

I am also grateful to my father, Nick Nichols, who is watching today, for raising me with the belief that my gender should in no way limit my opportunities or diminish my accomplishments. This helped shape my lifelong dedication to the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity and my belief in the power of partnership.

Public service is an honor and responsibility I have embraced throughout my life, including when I was appointed by President Obama to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, where I worked on genocide and atrocity prevention as a member of the Committee on Conscience. As a board member for the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, I have brought my voice to today's human rights challenges - local, national, and global.

If confirmed, I would bring with me to the UN Human Rights Council my experience and a determination to defend the human rights of all individuals. I would take on this important role with my eyes wide open. The Council is the most important multilateral venue designed to promote international human rights, but its flaws and failings are real. Among those flaws is a persistent, inexcusable bias against Israel – the only nation in the world assigned a permanent agenda item at the Council.

As long as it persists, I will take every opportunity to demand an end to this bias, to insist on the fair treatment of Israel like any other country, and the elevation of *genuine* human rights challenges on the Council's agenda. This includes tirelessly underscoring our objection to the open-ended Commission of Inquiry targeting Israel.

The Council's membership is clearly part of the problem. Nations such as Venezuela, with abysmal human rights records, have no place on a Council dedicated to promoting those rights and protecting those defending them. I understand the difficulty in reforming the Council's membership rules, but if confirmed I will lead an effort to encourage credible nations from all regions to step forward to serve on this body and deny those seats to human rights abusers.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, Members of this Committee: when Secretary of State Blinken announced the President's decision that the United States would seek election to the Council, he laid out these very concerns. He also underscored the very real importance and utility of a functional Human Rights Council, which at its best prompts investigation of abuses in places such as Syria and North Korea, which gives voice to those working *against* racism, intolerance, and religious persecution, and promotes concrete action to advance respect for the human rights of women, LGBTQI persons, and minorities.

I understand the skepticism of some who believe the United States should not legitimize this imperfect body with its presence, and I know that if confirmed there will be challenges.

But I also know that conversations about global human rights are poorer without an American voice. Human rights defenders around the world are more vulnerable if the United States is not a present, forceful leader in venues such as the Human Rights Council. And I know from experience that more can be accomplished in active partnership than in principled absence.

The President and Secretary Blinken have placed human rights at the center of U.S. Foreign Policy. If confirmed, I will be a relentless advocate for American interests at the Human Rights Council and in defense of the human rights that should be enjoyed by all.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.