

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

Stop U.S. Taxpayer Dollars from Bankrolling a UN that Limits Freedom of the Press

Co-Sponsor the United Nations Transparency, Accountability, and Reform Act

Dear Colleague:

Angered by past and continuing media reports of corruption, mismanagement, and inaction at the United Nations, the UN is again seeking to cover up the evidence and stifle freedom of the press.

Meeting on May 8 about “reporting by the press,” high-level UN officials discussed sending threatening letters to several press agencies and other bodies, as well as complaining to Google News about a small, independent news agency that has uncovered numerous UN scandals. Last year, a similar complaint resulted in that agency’s temporary removal from Google News. In response to a question about that meeting, the Secretary-General’s spokeswoman furiously retorted, “I don’t have to account to you for meetings I participate in.”

The UN’s Department of Management is also reportedly pushing to obstruct press coverage, seeking to charge media outlets \$23,000 to maintain office space, and to move journalists covering the UN into open, un-walled offices – deterring whistleblowers from coming forth and preventing oversight.

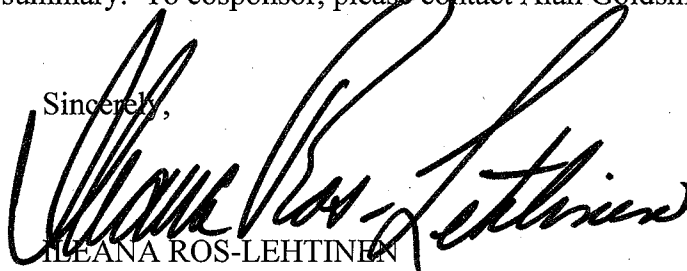
These UN efforts to restrict press freedom and oversight directly contravene the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes that “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression... and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” Once again, the UN is actually undermining the principles on which it was founded.

Nevertheless, the U.S. contributed nearly \$5 billion to the UN last year, and the FY 2010 budget request seeks billions more. The U.S. and other responsible nations must not ignore the UN’s restrictions on freedoms and its lack of transparency and accountability – we must demand better.

Therefore, please join the over **90** co-sponsors of **H.R. 557**, the **United Nations Transparency, Accountability, and Reform Act of 2009**, which seeks to effect meaningful reform by conditioning U.S. funding for the UN on sweeping, systemic change at that institution.

I have attached a brief bill summary. To cosponsor, please contact Alan Goldsmith at X68467.

Sincerely,



MEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

Ranking Member

House Committee on Foreign Affairs

H.R. 557 - THE UN TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND REFORM ACT OF 2009

Title I - Funding of the UN: States the policy of the US to pursue the apportionment of the UN regular budget on a voluntary basis (rather than the current, compulsory assessments). This will allow the United States to more effectively direct its contributions. After two years, the bill expects that at least 80% of the UN regular budget will be funded on a voluntary basis. After that point and until the 80% threshold is met, the US shall withhold 50% of its non-voluntary regular budget contributions assessed by the UN. Note that this makes it a sliding incentive scale, not an "all-or-nothing" sanction: The more the UN makes its regular budget voluntary, the less we withhold, up until the UN hits 80% voluntary funding, at which point there would be no withholdings.

Title II - Transparency and Accountability for United States Contributions to the United Nations: Creates a U.S. Inspector General for our contributions to the UN system and makes funding of UN entities contingent upon their providing the IG with a written pledge to cooperate in sharing basic oversight information with the IG, and complying with that pledge.

Title III - U.S. Policy at the United Nations: States U.S. policy on various issues relating to the UN (e.g., transparency, reform, Security Council expansion, terrorism, anti-Semitism, treatment of Israel, UNRWA contributions) and requires reports from the State Department on UN reform and personnel practices.

Title IV - UN Human Rights Council: States that the U.S. may not run for a seat and must withhold a proportionate share of our UN regular budget contribution equal to our proportion of Council funding until State can certify that the Council does not include Member states: subject to Security Council sanctions; under Security Council-mandated human rights investigation; subject to a country-specific resolution of the prior Human Rights Commission within the prior 5 years; that are state sponsors of terrorism; or that are "countries of particular concern" for religious freedom violations.

Title V - International Atomic Energy Agency: directs the U.S. Permanent Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to advance a number of reforms at the organization, including measures to strengthen the IAEA's ability to monitor member states' compliance with their obligations and to ensure that states which are not in compliance do not receive nuclear-related assistance from the IAEA or other countries. In addition, conditions would be placed on the U.S. financial contribution to the IAEA to ensure that state sponsors of terrorism, such as Iran and Syria, do not receive such assistance.

Title VI - Peacekeeping: Calls for far-reaching reforms in the areas of planning, management, conduct and accountability in UN peacekeeping, and mandates the withholding of US support for new or expanded peacekeeping missions until the most critical, but immediately achievable, reforms are instituted (subject to a Presidential waiver based on vital US national security interests or avoidance of genocide).