US Withdrawal from UNHRC

Why in news?

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The United States has recently withdrawn from the United Nations Human Rights Council.

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How has US's HRC membership been?

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- Under President Obama, the US was elected for a maximum of 2 consecutive terms by the UNGA.
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- After a year off, it was re-elected in 2016 for the third term.
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- The US is half-way through a three-year term.
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- It would now be the first member to withdraw from the council.
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What is the rationale?

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- **Israel** - The council recently voted to probe killings in Gaza and accused Israel of using excessive force.
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- The US and Australia cast the only “no” votes.
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- US's current move comes as a response to the alleged bias of UNHRC against Israel.
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- The disproportionate focus and unending hostility are cited as proof for the Council's political bias.
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- **Immigrants** - It is also a response to the intense criticism against US for detaining children at the US-Mexico border.
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- UN human rights chief called on Washington to halt its “unconscionable” separation policy.
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- **Council** - Trump administration had long threatened to quit if council reforms were not undertaken.
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- The US perceives the council's membership as disrespect for the most basic rights.
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- The US wants to make it easier to expel member states with poor rights records.
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- Currently, two-thirds majority of UN General Assembly is needed to suspend a member state.
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- US expressed dissatisfaction at Russia, China, Cuba and Egypt for thwarting US efforts to reform the council.
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- The US has maintained that the withdrawal was not any retreat from its human rights commitments.
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What are the implications?

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- **Agreements** - Washington’s withdrawal is the latest US rejection of multilateral engagement.
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- The earlier ones are withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement and Iran nuclear deal.
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- **Reforms** - HRC reform discussions are going on, with engagement by states and human rights organisations.
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- It thus shows US's impatience to stay on course a multilateral process.
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- **Rights** - It signals that US is not making human rights a priority in its foreign policy.
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- By giving up its role at the HRC, it reduces its ability to influence the human rights agenda.
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- **Global** - Withdrawal would make it more difficult to advance human rights priorities around the world.
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- It could bolster countries such as Cuba, Russia, Egypt and Pakistan.
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- These countries resist UN's authority citing it as interference in their sovereign issues.
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- Many countries are now advocating withdrawal.
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Source: The Hindu, The Wire

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