Pompeo Urges No Vote For Cuba On Human Rights Council

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US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has urged UN members not to support Cuba's bid to join the organization's Human Rights Council.

"It's outrageous that the Human Rights Council would offer to seat Cuba, a brutal dictatorship that traffic its own doctors under the guise of humanitarian missions," the top US diplomat said on Wednesday.

Pompeo has described Cuba's sale of medical services, Havana's main source of foreign exchange, as a form of human trafficking.

"No country should vote Cuba onto the council," he said.

Under President Donald Trump, Washington has reversed an opening with Cuba initiated by former president Barack Obama, hardening a trade embargo in effect since 1962.

Cuba, which sat on the UN Human Rights Council in 2014-2016 and 2017-2019, has applied to fill one of the regional vacancies for 2021-2023.

The Geneva-based Council was created in 2006 to replace the Commission on Human Rights and is made up of 47 member states chosen by direct and secret ballot.

The seats are distributed geographically and are awarded for a period of three years. Members are not eligible for immediate reelection after serving two consecutive terms.

Washington withdrew from the council in 2018, with ambassador Nikki Haley calling it a "cesspool of political bias" and a "hypocritical and self-serving organization that makes a mockery of human rights."

In particular, Haley had slammed the council for adopting resolutions condemning Israel, which has come under scrutiny by the council for its treatment of Palestinians.

Venezuela in 2019 won a seat on the council for 2020-2022 despite criticism of its human rights record, with Washington criticizing the move as "a farce that further undermines the council's already frail credibility."