[Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani](https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/dr-ramesh-kumar-vankwani)

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The US has finally decided to rejoin the UN Human Rights Council, one of the most important and significant international forums under the United Nations. According to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the recent move is part of the new US administration’s recommitment “to a foreign policy centered on democracy, human rights, and equality.”

Three years ago, Donald Trump, during his tenure as president of the US, was pulled out of the Human Rights Council. Therefore, the recent decision is seen as having reversed yet another key policy of the previous administration. “We know that the Council has the potential to be an important forum for those fighting tyranny and injustice around the world,” a US State Department official expressed.

The current status of the US is as an observer with no voting rights. However, the Biden Administration is interested to play a pivotal role in the decision-making process by securing a full member seat in the upcoming elections this year. The withdrawal of the world's only superpower from the global institution had resulted in damaging America's reputation in the eyes of the international community. It was also very disappointing for many countries which believe that the US is supposed to protect human rights, especially in third-world countries. On the other hand, some countries, in order to achieve their goals, also tried to take advantage of the absence of the US from the Human Rights Council.

Today, human rights organizations around the world are welcoming the return of the United States. In my view, the US, being a champion of human rights and democracy, is once again in a better position to support oppressed communities. Its active presence will also ensure an abatement of human rights violations, and some sense of justice.

It is on record that every Democratic elected president used to play a pivotal role in protecting human rights globally. During Obama’s tenure, Joe Biden has been seen to have been actively contributing in protecting human rights. Now, after taking charge as president of the United States, he has considered it important to contact leaders of various countries, including India, involved in human rights abuses.

Former US president Trump used to ignore India's controversial state policies towards minorities and the people of Occupied Kashmir. However, Biden has expressed disappointment on India's move to impose a lockdown in the occupied valley as well as over its controversial citizenship act.

Similarly, Indian-origin US Vice President Kamala Harris is also a renowned human rights activist who raised a voice for the oppressed people of Indian-held Kashmir. In this regard, the British media has already hinted in a report that the new US administration can pressurize Modi’s government over certain issues including human rights. According to BBC, a number of other Democratic party leaders also have reservations over the undemocratic conduct of the Modi regime.

The current Indian government is also directly responsible for the mysterious deaths of 11 Pakistani Hindu migrants, who went there in hope of a bright future. In this regard, the patriotic Hindu community, on the call of the Pakistan Hindu Council, is continuously recording peaceful protests to seek the attention of the international community.

Unfortunately, the Indian government is not accepting our just demand to hand over the ashes of their dead bodies for performing last rituals. Previous days, during the meeting of the National Assembly Committee on Foreign Affairs, I vowed that the blood of innocent Pakistani Hindu nationals should not go in vain. Pakistan should raise this issue at every international forum available, including the Human Rights Council.

Biden's commitment to empower the UN Human Rights Council is indeed a very positive sign which reflects that the protection of human rights is a top priority of the current US leadership. However, there is also a dire need for the government of Pakistan to present our case before the US and the international community in an effective and efficient manner.

The writer is a member of the National Assembly and patron-in-chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council.

Twitter: @RVankwani