McGovern and Raskin Condemn Trump Administration's Withdrawal from Human Rights Accountability Mechanism

WASHINGTON—*Today, Congressman Jim McGovern, Co-Chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, and Congressman Jamie Raskin, Executive Committee Member of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee, released the following statement condemning the United States' absence from its Universal Periodic Review.*

Today, the Trump Administration refused to participate in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council in a shameful attempt to shield itself from accountability for its failure to uphold the rights of the American public. This mechanism provides a standard peer-review-type evaluation of the human rights commitments of every UN member. In 2025, the Trump Administration broke with precedent and announced that the United States would not participate in the UPR, as it had done without objection in 2020, 2015, and 2010. This gave the U.S. the ignominious distinction of becoming the first Member State to refuse to engage in the UPR, undermining the mechanism's legitimacy and making our nation a pariah.

The UPR has been a vital venue in which Administrations of both parties have sought to hold accountable the world's worst abusers of human rights. Secretary of State Marco Rubio encouraged U.S. engagement as recently as 2024, when as Senator he wrote to then-Secretary of State Blinken urging him to raise human rights issues during China's fourth UPR, including the unjust imprisonment of Dr. Gulshan Abbas, Joshua Wong, and Jimmy Lai. "The United States must stand up for the principle of the universality of human rights and help hold the PRC accountable for its ignoring its obligations to respect human rights under international law," Rubio said. We agree. But the United States cannot credibly demand that China's government—or any other—honor their human rights commitments while refusing to subject its own record to scrutiny.

The Administration's refusal is also out of step with the American public. A recent study found that 92 percent of Americans believe that leading by example on human rights is important to the United States' global reputation. Withdrawal from the UPR undermines American credibility, suggesting the Administration lacks confidence in its ability to defend its human rights record. It also risks encouraging rights-abusing governments, such as China and Russia, to follow the U.S. precedent to evade accountability themselves.

The Trump Administration should reverse its decision. The American people demand scrutiny. As we prepare for a new Congress, we recommit ourselves to fostering respect for human dignity and the systems that help to uphold it—for the sake of the American people and our neighbors around the world.