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OVERVIEW

The Jewish community has always held mixed feelings about the United Nations. While the State of Israel was created by the U.N., the international body has a history of a one-sided, hostile approach to Israel.

After decades of bias and marginalization, in recent years there have been some positive developments for Israel at the U.N. Nonetheless, the record and the culture of the U.N. continue to demonstrate a predisposition against Israel, its policies, and its full involvement within the international body. Indeed, in a meeting in April 2007, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon acknowledged to ADL leaders that Israel has been treated poorly at the U.N. and that, while some progress has been made, this bias still remains an issue.

Examples of institutionalized bias against Israel include:

- From 2008-2009, the U.N. General Assembly (GA) continued to spend a disproportionate amount of time focusing on Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, passing 20 resolutions which are one-sided or blatantly anti-Israel.
- Of 10 emergency special sessions called by the GA, six have been about Israel. No emergency sessions have been held on the Rwandan genocide, ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, or the two decades of atrocities in Sudan.
- The U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC), which replaced the Commission on Human Rights in March 2006, has been even more hopelessly ineffective than its predecessor, and is permanently engaged in criticism of Israel while ignoring pressing international human rights crises.
- For decades, Israel was the only member state consistently denied admission into a regional group. The Arab states continue to prevent Israeli membership in the Asian Regional Group, Israel's natural geopolitical grouping. As a result, Israel sought entry into the Western and Others Group (WEOG) and in May 2000 was granted admission to that regional group in New York, but not in Geneva, the seat of several U.N. bodies and subsidiary organizations. Israel's participation in the U.N., therefore, is still limited and it is restricted from participating in U.N. Geneva-based activities.

There have been some recent positive developments at the U.N. with Israel accomplishing a major first when the U.N.'s Second Committee (Economic and Financial) adopted an Israeli-initiated draft resolution dealing with agricultural technology for development. In addition, the U.N. has begun to address other issues of concern to the Jewish community, particularly anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial, in a highly visible way.

Israel at the UN: Progress Amid A History of Bias

Early Biases

It is ironic that the United Nations is often viewed as a forum for the delegitimization of the State of Israel, considering that the international body played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Jewish State.

In fact, the U.N. laid the essential groundwork for the establishment of Israel by passing U.N. Resolution 181 in 1947, which called for the partition of British Mandate Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. Following Israel's independence in 1948, the Jewish State became an official member of the international body.

Since that time, however, the U.N. has more often than not demonstrated hostility and antagonism toward Israel by disproportionately criticizing Israeli policies, singling out Israel for human rights offenses, and prohibiting Israel from the full participation enjoyed by other members.

Since Israel's establishment, Arab member states of the U.N. have used the GA as a forum for isolating and chastising Israel. With support from third-world nations, particularly the Non-Aligned Group, and others, the Arab states have had little difficulty passing harsh anti-Israel resolutions through the GA. Even today, the strength of these groups in the world body allows them to continue rebuking Israel.

While anti-Israel resolutions are easily passed in the GA, this is not the case in the Security Council, where resolutions are binding in nature, and where the United States has consistently used its veto power to prevent the passage of such resolutions.

Several U.N. committees and divisions of the Secretariat established as a result of GA resolutions, which primarily carry out the anti-Israel agenda of the Arab nations that were instrumental in their creation in the 1970s, are deeply engaged in promoting programs and initiatives that are harshly critical of Israel.

Among these are:

- The Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat;
- The Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices in the Territories; and
- The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Some U.N. agencies have also exhibited anti-Israel sentiments. For example, between 1974 and 1978 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) instituted financial sanctions against Israel, passed hundreds of resolutions criticizing Israel's activities in the West Bank, and denounced Israel's archeological and restoration efforts in Jerusalem.

Among the most harmful anti-Israel U.N. resolutions was the notorious General Assembly Resolution 3379, equating Zionism with racism, which passed in November 1975 by a vote of 72 to 35. That resolution declared Zionism is "a form of racism and racial discrimination... [and] is a threat to world peace and security." The resolution was meant to deny Israel's political legitimacy by attacking the moral basis for its existence. This resolution remained on the books for many years until it was finally repealed in December 1991, following the Madrid Conference, as a goodwill gesture in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. Former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan called Resolution 3379 "the low point in Jewish-U.N. relations."

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Resolutions 242 and 338

In the 1960s and 1970s, two resolutions were passed by the U.N. which have become the cornerstone of Middle East diplomatic efforts. On November 22, 1967, following the Six Day War, the Security Council passed Resolution 242 with the stated intention of providing a solution for the conflict in the Middle East. This resolution called for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied during the Six Day War, in exchange for the "termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force."

Similarly, Resolution 338, passed on October 22, 1973, in the midst of the Yom Kippur War, called for the termination of the ongoing armed battle and for negotiations to begin between Israel and her Arab neighbors on the land-for-peace premise of Resolution 242. In calling upon the Arab states to end their war against Israel, and to engage in direct peace talks, the U.N. created a framework for future peace negotiations.

Resolutions 242 and 338 call for Israel's "withdrawal from territories" as part of a peace agreement. This provision is understood primarily by Israel, the United States and the drafters of the resolution that, as part of a peace agreement, Israel's withdrawal from territories would be consistent with its security needs. However, the Palestinians and other U.N. member states continue to use these resolutions to claim that Israel should withdraw from *all* West Bank and Gaza territories.

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The Oslo Years: A Warming Atmosphere

As the Middle East peace process got underway with Israelis and Palestinians signing the historic Declaration of Principles in 1993, there began to be a significant decrease in the number of anti-Israel condemnations at the U.N. For the first time the Human Rights Commission condemned anti-Semitism as a form of racism. Then, in 1994, when Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres addressed the General Assembly, only the representatives from Iran did not attend. This contrasted markedly with the roll call of earlier years when it was common for Arab members to leave immediately when an Israeli was at the podium.

Israel's participation in U.N. operations, from which it had previously been barred, also began to increase. In June 1993, Israel was nominated to its first U.N. committee, the Committee for Information. In 1994, Israelis participated in the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Angola and traveled to South Africa as part of a U.N. effort to monitor that country's first democratic elections. At that time, Israelis also began to be elected to notable U.N. positions, such as the high administrative tribunal at The Hague, Vice Chair of the World Health Organization's Executive Committee and the Human Rights Committee.

In addition, efforts were made to amend a number of previously adopted anti-Israel resolutions. In 1992, the GA passed 29 anti-Israel resolutions, but in the years following, seven were eliminated or consolidated, and four were redrafted in favor of Israel. In 1995, the GA adopted 18 Middle East resolutions, eight of which were then reworded to refrain from condemning Israel.

In 1993, as part of the attempt to revise outdated anti-Israel resolutions, the U.N. amended the group of resolutions, adopted each year by the GA, known as the "Question of Palestine:"

- The resolution entitled, "The Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine," was revised to omit its reference to Jerusalem as occupied territory, as well as its charge against Israeli settlements as illegal obstacles to peace.
- The resolution entitled, "Situation in the Middle East" was revised to omit condemnation of Israel's presence in the territories.

Also in 1993, the annually adopted GA resolution entitled "Israeli Nuclear Armament," was revised to eliminate its severe criticism of Israel.

Moreover, between 1993 and 1995 the Security Council never directly condemned Israel. During this period, the Security Council, for the first time, also denounced terrorism against Israel.

The most central resolution passed during this warming trend toward Israel came on

December 14, 1993 when 155 member states endorsed the Israel-Palestinian signed Declaration of Principles and the Israel-Jordan peace agreement and granted “full support for the achievements of the peace process so far.” This resolution was the first U.N. call for Middle East peace that did not criticize Israel. In fact, many viewed this improvement between Israel and the international community as actual U.N. support for some Israeli government policies. In October 1993, for the first time since 1981, the Arab members of the U.N. did not challenge Israel's seat at the GA.

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1995-2000: Bias Resurfaces

After several years of increased Israeli participation and acceptance at the United Nations, Israel once again became the target of condemnation and unduly harsh criticism on a host of issues, including the status of Jerusalem, Israel's operations in Lebanon, its policy toward the Palestinians, the peace process, and Israeli housing projects over the Green Line.

December 1995: Following the announcement of an Israeli building project in eastern Jerusalem at Har Homa, the General Assembly passed Resolution 50/22 by a vote of 133 to 1, which stated that Israel's sovereignty over Jerusalem is “null and void and has no validity whatsoever.” Furthermore, it denounced “the transfer of some States of their diplomatic missions to Jerusalem.” Israel was the only nation to vote against the resolution. The U.S. was one of 13 countries which abstained from the vote. The U.S. abstained on the grounds that according to the Oslo agreements the issue of Jerusalem was to be determined during bilateral final status negotiations, that interference by the international community in the peace process was detrimental to its success, and that one-sided condemnations of Israel served only to exacerbate tensions in the region.

April 1996: An Israeli counterattack against Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon who had fired Katyusha rockets in northern Israel inadvertently hit a U.N. base in Qana, tragically killing 100. In response, the GA called for a halt in Israeli-Lebanese hostilities, condemned Israel alone for the incident and demanded that Israel pay reparations and withdraw from all Lebanese territory. In June 1997, the GA again passed a resolution calling on Israel to pay reparations to cover the damages in Qana. No reference was made to ongoing Hezbollah aggression against Israel, or the damage Hezbollah caused in northern Israel.

November 1996: Following an Israeli military closure in the West Bank and Gaza, which had been implemented in response to a series of Palestinian suicide bombings that killed 59 Israelis, the GA issued a report condemning Israeli policy toward the Palestinians. With no consideration of Israel's security concerns, the U.N. report harshly rebuked Israel for human rights violations, demanded an end to the military closure and the release of Palestinian prisoners. The report also criticized the expansion of Jewish settlements and accused Israel of “creeping ethnic cleansing” of Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

December 1996: The GA passed several resolutions regarding Israel and the Middle East peace process. One of the resolutions demanded that Israel withdraw from all of the territories occupied in 1967 and stressed the importance of the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians. Notably, some states such as Turkey voted for the resolution but acknowledged Israel's perspective, as the Turkish ambassador said "Although Turkey supports draft resolution A/51/L.36, we believe that it does not reflect all the obstacles on the road to lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. We believe that one of the fundamental threats to the peace process is terrorism. We would therefore like to emphasize the urgent need for countries that lend their support to terrorism immediately to stop that illegal and destructive practice and refrain from using terrorism as a foreign policy instrument." Such sentiments were echoed by the Israeli ambassador who added that the resolution stands "in contradiction to the very principles upon which the peace process is based." Another resolution demanded that Israel withdraw from the entire Golan Heights. The U.S., which voted against these resolutions, reprimanded the GA, saying that its interjection into the peace process, and matters that the parties had agreed to discuss during bilateral negotiations, would only further complicate the situation in the Middle East.

1997: The Arab group at the U.N. tried to invoke the Fourth Geneva Convention against Israel, in regard to its settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and in particular to the Har Homa building project in Jerusalem. (The Fourth Geneva Convention on Rules of War was adopted in 1949 by the international community in response to Nazi atrocities during World War II. The international treaty governs the treatment of civilians during wartime, including hostages, diplomats, spies, bystanders and civilians in territory under military occupation. The convention outlaws torture, collective punishment and the resettlement by an occupying power of its own civilians on territory under its military control). In the 48 years since its adoption, the Fourth Geneva Convention had never been reconvened to address any world atrocities including those in Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, or Tibet. International efforts led by the U.S. were successful in scaling down a special U.N. meeting in Geneva held on July 15, 1997. The closed-door meeting lasted a mere 45 minutes. However, a resolution was unanimously passed stating that the Fourth Geneva Convention does apply to Israeli settlements in the "occupied territories."

May 2000: Israel was accepted into the regional group known as Western and Others Group (WEOG), a major positive development during this period of increased hostility toward Israel. Until this time, the Arab states had acted to ensure that Israel was the only member state consistently denied admission into a regional group by preventing Israel's membership into its natural geopolitical grouping, the Asian Regional Group. And, even so, Israel was only granted admission to WEOG in New York, but not in Geneva and thus cannot participate in U.N. Geneva-based activities.

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2000–2004: U.N. Anti-Israel Bias and Anti-Semitism

With the outbreak of the Second Palestinian Intifada in September 2000, the environment in the U.N. became increasingly hostile towards Israel. Numerous General Assembly resolutions condemning Israel for its response to Palestinian violence and terrorism were passed with little or no mention of Palestinian violence and terrorism. At the same time, new efforts began to combat anti-Semitism and to promote Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

The Durban Conference

The U.N.'s approach to Israel hit a new low with the 2001 U.N. World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa. Members of the U.N. and a host of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participated in this third international conference on racism, which was intended to examine effective mechanisms to combat racial discrimination and promote understanding and awareness of this global problem. Despite these laudable goals, the conference was hijacked by a number of NGOs and Arab block states who attempted to focus on Israeli-Palestinian issues, and used their platform to delegitimize Israel and to promote base anti-Semitism, including a return to hateful anti-Jewish canards such as "Zionism is racism."

The formal governmental conference ended with the adoption of a "compromise" proposal on the Middle East, which was reached between the European Union and Arab countries and facilitated by South Africa. Even at the final plenary session of the conference, Arab delegates led by Syria and Pakistan sought to add three paragraphs of the earlier anti-Israel language that had prompted the U.S. and Israel to abandon the conference. Brazil offered a "motion of no action" requesting that, having reached a compromise on the Middle East, delegates move forward to accept the declaration and leave aside paragraphs on which they were unable to agree. The motion was approved by a vote of 51-38. The compromise proposal therefore recognized the Palestinian right of return, but omitted language which would be critical of Israel.

Following the Durban debacle, and in the midst of a resurgence of anti-Jewish violence in Western Europe, efforts were made to address the issue of anti-Semitism at the U.N. In June 2004, at the first U.N. Department of Public Information Seminar on Anti-Semitism, Secretary-General Kofi Annan described what he called "an alarming resurgence of this phenomenon." In his remarks to the conference, the Secretary General acknowledged that "the United Nations' record on anti-Semitism has at times fallen short of our ideals" and made specific reference to the GA resolution of 1975, equating Zionism with racism, as "an especially unfortunate decision." In concluding his speech, the Secretary General called on the U.N. to take up the fight against anti-Semitism and proclaimed that, "Jews everywhere must feel that the United Nations is their home, too."

The Quartet and the Peace Process

In 2002, in an effort to create an international body to mediate peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, the Quartet on the Middle East was created. The Quartet -- including the U.S., Russia, the European Union and the United Nations, as represented by the Secretary General -- was established in Madrid under the auspices of Spanish Prime Minister José María Anzar. The Quartet is entrusted with mediating peace between the two sides and deploys a special envoy to the region to oversee and initiate talks between the parties.

Despite these efforts toward peace, Israel, which was suffering from a campaign of deadly Palestinian violence targeting Israeli population centers, continued to face excessive criticism and condemnation at the U.N. Nearly every response Israel undertook to defend its civilians from suicide bombings was condemned in resolutions adopted by the GA.

The Security Barrier and the International Court of Justice

Of particular focus in the GA has been Israel's security barrier, which was devised and implemented to defend Israeli civilians by deterring Palestinian terrorist infiltrations.

In an effort to halt the construction of the barrier, the Palestinian Authority and its supporters submitted a resolution to the Security Council which asked the Council to recommend the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Although the Palestinians were unable to find the support they needed in the Security Council, on December 8, 2003, the GA, in a special emergency session, adopted the Palestinian-initiated resolution. That resolution, entitled "What are the legal consequences arising from the construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory," called on the ICJ to issue an advisory opinion as to the legality of the barrier. The resolution passed 90-8, with 74 countries abstaining.

It should be noted that because Israel is barred from participating in U.N. Geneva-based regional groups, an Israeli judge cannot be elected to the ICJ, and the State of Israel cannot even participate in the voting for the makeup of the court.

The ICJ issued an advisory opinion on the Israeli security barrier on July 9, 2004. The Court concluded that Israel violated international law in the routing of the security fence and called on Israel to dismantle sections built in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In the opinion from which U.S. judge Thomas Buergenthal and Dutch judge Pieter H. Kooijmans dissented, the court further called on the international community to refrain from rendering “aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by such construction” (of the fence). Twenty-two nations had submitted briefs which voiced opposition to the case either because they supported Israel’s right to self-defense or because they felt the ICJ should not rule on such a specific issue related to such a complex conflict. The court, however, rejected this opposition and accepted, without reservation, the arguments of the Palestinians and their supporters.

Following the July 9 decision, the GA passed a resolution calling on Israel to abide by the non-binding ICJ decision and to remove the security barrier.

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2005–Present: Positive Developments, But Old Patterns Continue

The past few years have seen a few positive developments for Israel at the United Nations, while much of the usual anti-Israel bias has continued as well.

On the positive side, Israeli diplomats have been appointed to various positions at the U.N.:

- In June 2007, for the first time in the organization’s history, an Israeli official was selected to head one of its committees. Rony Adam, head of the Israeli Foreign Ministry’s U.N. department, was chosen to head the U.N. Committee for Program and Coordination. Adam was unanimously elected to the post after serving as the committee deputy director. The committee is comprised of 33 countries, some of which have no diplomatic relations with Israel, such as Iran, Cuba and Indonesia.
- In July 2005, Israel was elected to the deputy chairmanship of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), a subsidiary body of the GA.
- In June 2005, Dan Gillerman, Israel’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the U.N., was appointed to be one of the 21 vice presidents of the GA, marking the first time an Israeli had been chosen for this position since Abba Eban in 1953. Israel’s candidacy as vice president of the GA was put forth by the Western European and Others Group (WEOG), the regional group to which it belongs.

In a significant first, in August 2008 Israel was elected to the Universal Postal Union Operations Council and will be represented at the 24th Universal Postal Congress held in Geneva Switzerland. While Israel had been a member of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) since December 1949, the Jewish State had never been elected to the professional decision-making body which determines the financial and operational activities of the UPU.

In another truly historic development, 2007 saw the first Israel-initiated resolution adopted. On December 11, 2007 the Second Committee (Economic and Financial) adopted an Israeli-initiated draft resolution dealing with agricultural technology for development. U.N. member states supported the resolution in a vote of 118 countries in favor, with 29 abstentions and no objections.

Bias Continues

The Bias of the President of the General Assembly Invades the UN

The 63rd General Assembly was also marred by the actions and comments of the General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann. Throughout his tenure, Brockmann showed his disdain for Israel and his empathy towards the Palestinians. During the General Assembly Debate in September 2008, President Ahmadinejad gave a horrifically anti-Semitic and anti-Israel speech. While many in the audience shunned him, President Brockmann stood and embraced him. Unfortunately, this hug was the beginning of Brockmann's unhindered display of his prejudice, indeed, Israeli ambassador to the UN called him an "Israel hater."

In November, Brockmann attended and spoke at the UN Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and used the podium to disparage and insult the Jewish State, calling Israeli policies "a version of the hideous policy of apartheid" and called for the international community to boycott Israel.

The following month, Brockmann continued his campaign by attempting to prevent the Israeli Ambassador from speaking when she was to represent the regional group Western European and Others Group at a UN event marking the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Brockmann also took full advantage to use Israel's operations in Gaza as a springboard for another tirade: "The behavior by Israel in bombarding Gaza is simply the commission of wanton aggression by a very powerful state against a territory that illegally occupies. The Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip represent...Disproportionate military response..." (December 27, 2008). As a result ADL called on Brockmann to refrain from speaking at the UN's annual Holocaust commemoration on January 27, 2009.

At the same time many U.N. bodies continue single out Israel for criticism. Indeed, the Human Rights Council continues to be a source of biased resolutions and statements.

Other U.N. bodies also continue to be a vehicle for unwarranted criticism of Israel. Throughout the year, the security council issued its annual one sided resolutions dealing with Israel and the Middle East. However, during Israel's operations in Gaza the statement issued by the Security Council equated Israeli self-defense measures with Hamas' terror tactics targeted at Israeli civilians.

Often, committees with seemingly innocuous names are hijacked and become forums for anti-Israel sentiment. One example of this is the March 2009 meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women which adopted 6 resolutions. Four of the resolutions were operational, one was about the prevalence of HIV/AIDs and the sixth was entitled *Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women* which: "*Expressing grave concern over the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation... Reaffirms that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society, and stresses the importance of efforts to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and to ensure their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.*"

In March 2006, the only resolution adopted by the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women condemned Israel for poor treatment of women, while not addressing the poor treatment of women in many of the U.N.'s other 191 member states. The fact that Israel's democratic system ensures gender equality was ignored, as were issues such as the Saudi Arabia's ban against women driving, Jordanian "honor killings," genital mutilation in many African countries, and other abuses of women.

While Israel was an active participant in the U.N. International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in August 2006, many Muslim and Arab countries refused to recognize Israel at the convention. In a transparent political move, a group of Arab countries proposed an article to the draft text that purportedly aims to protect the rights of persons with disabilities "under foreign occupation." Israel lobbied to keep this phrase out of the final text and called for a vote on the language. When they failed to get the required votes, Israel, recognizing the importance of the document, joined the consensus and the whole to adopt the resolution.

In general, the U.N.'s handling of the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in the summer of 2006 focused on Israel, and failed to call Hezbollah to task for its attack on Israeli soil. In addition to one-sided resolutions condemning Israel's military operations and ignoring Hezbollah's aggression U.N., member states took no action to prevent Syria and Iran from supplying Hezbollah with weapons and failed to enforce longstanding international commitments aimed at disarming Hezbollah including the Taif Accords and Security Council Resolution 1559.

Security Council Resolution 1701, passed on August 11, 2006, which temporarily halted the violence, showed some promise but has been poorly enforced. After calling for an international force, member states, particularly those in Europe, were initially reluctant to commit significant numbers of troops and complained of the lack of a mandate for the force in the resolution they authored. Overall, the international community refused to fully acknowledge Israel's right to self defense in the face of an unprovoked attack by Hezbollah across an internationally recognized border.

The Security Council continued to serve as a forum for anti-Israel sentiment and speech in 2008. On April 23, 2008, the Libyan Deputy Ambassador, Ibrahim Dabbashi, compared tactics used by Israel to the Nazi efforts to exterminate the Jews. Significantly the ambassadors from Costa Rica, Belgium, the United States, Britain and France left the chamber in protest after the comments were made. Meanwhile, no member of the Council has used such strong language to condemn the atrocities in Sudan or Myanmar.

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The Human Rights Council

Despite attempts at reform, the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights and the U.N. human rights bodies overseen by the High Commissioner continue to exhibit their historic bias against Israel.

In March 2006, the discredited U.N. Commission on Human Rights, known for its history of anti-Israel bias, was replaced by the new Human Rights Council (HRC) as part of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's program of reform. Israel and the United States, among many other member states, voted against the new council citing the ability of blatant human rights violators to be elected to the council and the failure to preempt continued institutional criticism of Israel.

During Israel's conflict with Hezbollah in July and August 2006, the HRC showed that the reorganization had done little to diminish the bias of its predecessor. In the second of its three special sessions, the HRC adopted a resolution condemning Israel's military actions in Lebanon. The resolution said nothing of Hezbollah's unprovoked attacks on Israel, use of human shields, and blatant violation of Security Council Resolution 1559, which calls for the group's disarmament. The resolution was sponsored by a group of Arab states and passed by a vote of 27-11 with 8 abstentions. Algeria, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Cuba, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Uruguay, and Zambia voted for the resolution, while Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland voted against it.

In November 2006, the HRC called its third special session, where once again the human rights body singled out Israel while ignoring the world's worst human rights violators. The Council passed Arab-backed resolutions condemning Israel for its occupation of the Golan Heights, the accidental deaths of Palestinians in Beit Hanoun in Gaza, and Israel's settlements in the West Bank. The General Assembly simultaneously passed its own resolution condemning Israel for Beit Hanoun. In the process of targeting Israel, the Council rejected a resolution that would have condemned the Khartoum regime for the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan.

The Council continued to single out Israel for condemnation with Council President Luis Alfonso de Alba, Mexico's Ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva, proposing in June 2007 that Israel, and Israel alone, become part of the Council's permanent agenda. The proposal was adopted by consensus. As a result, and continuing a practice institutionalized in the discredited Commission on Human Rights, the Jewish State was singled out for alleged human rights violations on the permanent agenda of the HRC under Item 7, titled: "Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories: Human rights violations and implications of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and other occupied Arab territories and the Right to self-determination of the Palestinian people." Israel is the only country in the world to appear on the HRC's permanent agenda, while countries such as China and Sudan, notorious for their human rights abuses, are included as part of the general debate.

In January 2008, the HRC held yet another special session which was specifically related to Israel. This sixth session was entitled "Human rights violations emanating from Israeli military incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the recent ones in occupied Gaza and West Bank town of Nablus." The bias of the HRC is also evident from the partial reports produced by the Rapporteurs and the nine one-sided resolutions it passed. One especially outrageous report by Special Rapporteur John Dugard, entitled "Human Rights Situation in Palestine and other Occupied Arab Territories" dated January 21, 2008, went so far as to justify the violence of Palestinian terrorists, blaming Israel for their actions and comparing them to the Europeans who resisted Nazi occupation, asserting that "acts of terror against military occupation must be seen in historical context."

In March 2008, as a result of the daily rocket attacks being fired from the Gaza Strip into Israeli cities, Israel tightened restrictions on imports into Gaza. In response, the High Commissioner of Human Rights at the time, Louise Arbour, chastised Israel and urged the international community to press Israel not to impose a humanitarian crisis on the Gaza Strip, while ignoring the suffering endured by Israelis who were faced with daily rocket barrages on their homes.

The 2008 appointment of Richard Falk as the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 constituted a new low for Israeli relations and indicated that the trend of the HRC's bias against Israel is far from over. Falk, a notorious critic of Israel, has compared Israeli treatment of Palestinians to the Nazis during the Holocaust.

In 2009, the High Commissioner of Human Rights, Navanetham Pillay sponsored a "Durban II Conference," meant to be a follow-up to the infamously anti-Semitic Durban Conference in 2001.

Pillay also followed her predecessors with her outspoken criticism of Israel. In November 2008, she harshly criticized Israeli policies in Gaza, giving scant acknowledgement to the daily and deadly rocket barrages Israeli civilians were faced with. Pillay continued to disparage Israel during the country's operations in Gaza, stating that she "Strongly condemned Israel's disproportionate use of force ...called on Israel's leaders to uphold international humanitarian law principles, especially those relating to proportionality in the use of military force and the prevention of collective punishment and the targeting of civilians."

The Council itself also issued a biased statement during Israel's operation in Gaza, condemning "the Israeli ongoing military operation" and demanding Israel "stop the targeting of civilians and medical facilities." Fortunately, the Council's biased approach toward Israel has been condemned by many international officials. Yet, despite this obvious bias, the Obama administration decided to join the council in March 2009.

While many groups were dismayed by the US' choice to participate in such a prejudiced forum, the administration assured the public that they would work to reform the Council from within.

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U.N. on Holocaust Denial and Anti-Semitism

While there is continuing bias against Israel at the U.N., the U.N. has begun to address other issues of concern to the Jewish community, particularly anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial.

On June 21, 2004, the United Nations Department of Public Information held the first U.N. conference on Anti-Semitism at U.N. Headquarters in New York. Secretary-General Kofi Annan opened the conference, entitled "*Confronting anti-Semitism: Education for Tolerance and Understanding*," which was aimed at examining different manifestations of intolerance, as well as exploring means to promote respect and understanding among peoples.

On November 23, 2004, the United Nations Third Committee passed a resolution on the "Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance," which included anti-Semitism. The resolution recognized "with deep concern the overall rise in instances of intolerance and violence directed against members of many religious communities in various parts of the world, including cases motivated by Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and

Christianophobia."

In January 2005, the General Assembly held a special session marking the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps during which a Holocaust exhibit was on display in the lobby of U.N. headquarters in New York. Annan visited Yad Vashem in a show of support. Even more significant, on November 1, 2005, the General Assembly passed a resolution establishing January 27 as an international Holocaust Memorial Day. The resolution was sponsored by the United States, Australia, Canada, Russia, and Israel, and was fully supported by Annan. Finally, on January 26, 2007, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution which "rejects efforts to deny the Holocaust." The resolution, introduced by the United States and co-sponsored by more than 100 countries, was adopted by consensus.