

**Institute for NGO Research Submission to the Secretary General for the
Report on the Implementation of Resolution A/RES/72/157**

The Institute for NGO Research,¹ an NGO in Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC, submits the following information to the United Nations Secretary General to assist in his preparation of a report regarding measures “undertaken to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,” pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 72/157 and Human Rights Council Resolution 37/77. This submission is a follow-up to our 2015 contribution to the Secretary General’s Report on the Elimination of Racism.²

Through the NGO Monitor project,³ the Institute provides information and analysis, promotes accountability, and supports discussion on the issues of NGO transparency, accountability, antisemitism, international law, human rights, humanitarian aid, and the laws of armed conflict. Our publications are produced for the benefit of government policy makers, journalists, philanthropic organizations and the general public. These works include: “The Role of International Legal and Justice Discourse in Promoting the New Antisemitism” (forthcoming 2019, University of Indiana Press); “Value Clash: Civil Society, Foreign Funding, and National Sovereignty” (Global Governance 2018); “The Human Rights Discourse and Israel: Beyond Victimhood and Underdogs” (International Journal on Human Rights 2017); “EU Foreign Policy and the Role of NGOs: The Arab-Israeli Conflict as a Case Study” (European Foreign Affairs Review, 2016); and *Best Practices for Human Rights and Humanitarian NGO Fact-Finding* (Nijhoff 2012).

Introduction

Antisemitism is a very virulent and enduring form of racism that has unfortunately been reemerging to levels not seen since the 1930s in the period leading up to the Holocaust. Throughout Europe, Jews have been deliberately targeted, violently attacked, and murdered at synagogues, schools, kosher markets, museums, and even in their homes. Jews wearing yarmulkes (skullcaps) or other religious markings are subject to harassment and violence.

¹ Formerly the Amuta for NGO Responsibility. Members of the Institute’s Advisory Board include Harvard Professor Alan Dershowitz; Colonel Richard Kemp, former commander of British forces in Iraq and Afghanistan; Amb. Vivian Berkovici, former Canadian Ambassador to Israel; Sen. Linda Frum, member of the Senate of the Province of Ontario; Hon. Michael Danby MP, senior member of the Australian Labor Party; R. James Woolsey, former US Director of Central Intelligence; former Member of Italian Parliament, Fiamma Nirenstein; US Jurist and former Legal Advisor to the State Department, Abraham Sofaer; UCLA Professor and President of the Daniel Pearl Foundation, Judea Pearl; Harvard Professor Ruth Wisse; former US government official, Elliot Abrams; Dr. Einat Wilf, former member of Knesset with the Israel Labor Party and advisor to Shimon Peres; Douglas Murray, Director of the Centre for Social Cohesion, best-selling author and commentator; and British journalist and international affairs commentator, Tom Gross.

² <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/data/images/File/NGOM%20Submission%20to%20Secretary%20General%20Report%20Elimination%20of%20Racism.pdf>

³ www.ngo-monitor.org

Crowds at soccer matches chant “Jews to the gas” and other genocidal taunts. Mass demonstrations in European capitals, ostensibly to protest Israeli actions towards Palestinians, are rife with antisemitic and Nazi sloganeering and imagery. University campuses in North America, Europe, South Africa, and elsewhere have seen extreme targeting and singling out of Jews. In Iran, state-sponsored Holocaust denial and calls to “wipe Israel off the map” are entrenched. Arab media is filled with vitriolic antisemitism and blood libels, and antisemitism is embedded in official Palestinian Authority and Hamas statements and campaigns. For instance, on April 30, 2018, during a speech to the Palestinian National Council, Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas offensively proclaimed that the Holocaust was caused by Jews’ “social behavior, [charging] interest, and financial matters” and denied the connection of the Jewish people to land of Israel.

The mixture of classical antisemitism directed at the Jewish people with the “new” antisemitism that obsessively targets the Jewish State is of particular concern. British lawyer Anthony Julius observes that this new antisemitism “became hegemonic in the 1990s and 2000s.... It is to be distinguished from the ‘old antisemitism’ because it takes Israel and the Zionist project as its collective term for the Jews.” Nevertheless, it is “continuous with the ‘old antisemitism’ in its principal stratagems and tropes, while novel in its specific focus upon the Jewish State—uniquely evil and without the right to exist.” Significantly, under this new form of antisemitism, Jewish self-determination rights (Zionism) and the existence of a Jewish state per se (not specific policies or territorial disputes) are the causes of “racism,” “apartheid,” and “occupation.” This new antisemitism fuels and exacerbates hatred of and discrimination against Jews globally under the pretext of “just criticizing Israel.” It also provides a pretext to politicians, UN officials, and NGOs (including superpowers like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch) to refuse to report on and condemn antisemitism and incitement against Jews.

Any report adopting “best practices” to combat the phenomenon of antisemitism, as part of the wider struggle against racism, must address these factors in detail.

We commend Secretary General Guterres for speaking out strongly against the institutionalized antisemitism at the UN and seeking to implement much needed and long-overdue reforms. Mr. Guterres has emphasized that the denial of Israel’s right to exist is a form of antisemitism (consistent with the International Holocaust Remembrance Association’s working definition, see below) and has denounced the recent resolutions passed by UNESCO for denying the Jewish historical connection to the region. In March 2017, he ordered the removal of a report issued by a UN agency known as “ESCWA” that employed the apartheid slur and promoted antisemitic BDS campaigns. This is an important start, but there is still much work to be done.

UN Complicity in the Promotion of Antisemitism:

Unfortunately, and despite the initiatives of Secretary General Guterres, the UN has been integrally involved in the promotion of antisemitism – from its complicity in the exclusion of Israel from regional groupings and committees to the exceedingly disproportionate number of resolutions, special committees, and reports targeting the country; the antisemitic propaganda created and promoted by the Division of Palestinian Rights; and the infamous 1975 UN General Assembly resolution slandering Zionism a form of “racism.” These are only but a few examples.

In fact, antisemitism can be said to be endemic in many UN institutions.

One of the most egregious cases of UN-supported antisemitism was the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism (WCAR, Durban Conference), including the preparatory events and follow-up activities. The Durban Conference, contrary to its intended goals, itself became an instrument of racism, directed at Israel and Jews. Professor Irwin Cotler, Canadian MP and former Justice Minister, Nelson Mandela’s lawyer, and a member of the Canadian delegation, characterized Durban as a “festival of hate” and noted that “the conference against racism that became a racist conference against Jews.”

The antisemitic agenda was driven by Iran and several Arab states, as well as many NGOs. The tenor was set during the preparatory conferences, particularly in Tehran, held in February 2001. Despite assurances from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Mary Robinson, the Iranian government did not grant visas to Israeli and Jewish representatives. At the Durban conference, Israel was singled out for attack, and an antisemitic atmosphere permeated the event, prompting the US, Israel and other countries to walk out. At the NGO Forum, Palestinian NGOs distributed copies of the antisemitic forgery, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” and leaflets depicting Hitler with the caption, “What if I had won? The answer: There would be No Israel and No Palestinian bloodshed.” Key paragraphs on antisemitism were deleted from official documents, and Jewish delegates were blocked from responding. Jewish representatives were subjected to verbal assaults and threats of physical violence. Major international NGOs, including Amnesty International were silent, while others, like Human Rights Watch indicated that representatives of Jewish groups were unwelcome.

Based on the tainted legacy of 2001, several countries refused to participate in the 2009 Durban follow-up conference, and no NGO forum was convened. Nevertheless, the impacts of Durban continue to be felt. In the aftermath of the conference, the Forum’s declaration became the action plan (the “Durban Strategy”) for the antisemitic BDS movement. Since the Conference, promotion of virulently antisemitic rhetoric and imagery, activities aimed at eliminating Jewish self-determination, and campaigns to economically destroy, and culturally and internationally isolate the Jewish state have received extensive support from UN institutions.

UN agencies such as the Division for Palestinian Rights, UN OCHA, UNRWA, OHCHR, and UNICEF are also explicitly engaged in the promotion of anti-Israel demonization. These agencies partner with and fund a small group of NGOs including many with close ties to terrorist groups, leaders of BDS campaigns, and groups that espouse antisemitic views. These partnerships produce publications, and sponsor events and other initiatives that advance discriminatory themes, including the allegation that Jewish self-determination is a form of racism or colonialism.⁴ UN officials regularly appear at and support these events. The UNHRC Special Rapporteur has a history of extreme anti-Israel activism. His March 2018 report to the UN Human Rights Council included antisemitic themes and canards, ignoring the history of the Jewish people and erasing Palestinian terrorism, to describe Israel as “rapacious” and “avaricious.”

Similarly, while the UN is soliciting submissions for best practices to end racism, the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is hosting a conference on 17-18 May “to mark the anniversary of the 1948 War and subsequent uprooting and mass displacement of Palestinians, known in Arabic as *Al-Nakba (the Catastrophe)*.” *In other words*, the aim of this conference is to promote Israel’s founding and continuing existence as a “catastrophe.”

Best Practices to Counter Antisemitism

Like many UN agencies, European governments have also been involved in promoting and funding antisemitic activities and campaigns with hundreds of millions of dollars, pounds, euros, and kroner, they have also enabled problematic activities and rhetoric. For too long, this bigotry has been sustained by the secrecy that governs funding processes and shields such funding from public scrutiny. The lack of transparency is manifest in government websites and databases that do not provide basic information (i.e. amounts, project descriptions) on grants, the refusal of funding agencies to release documentation on evaluations and decision making, and the refusal of government officials and diplomats responsible for allocating funds to respond substantively to inquiries. The ongoing government funding to NGOs that engage in antisemitic activities and use antisemitic rhetoric highlights the persistent double standard: Hatred of Jews is tolerated in a way that would be unthinkable for other racial, ethnic, or religious groups. Likewise, Jewish and Israeli targets are often denied the right to define what constitutes discrimination against them.

⁴ See for example: <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/un-ceirpp-50-years-occupation-bds-antisemitism-demonization/>; <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/ngo-sources-un-report-question-apartheid/>; <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/press-releases/70-years-un-vote-ngo-monitor-calls-sec-gen-end-rejection-israel/>; <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/unicef-ngo-working-group-campaign-blacklist-idf/>; <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/special-rapporteur-human-rights-palestinian-territory/>; <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/thanks-un-ngo-network-israel-earns-double-amount-un-resolutions-country/>; https://www.ngo-monitor.org/submissions/submission_blacklist_unhrc/; <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/un-women-report-israel-faulty-methodology-promotion-ngo-political-warfare/>; <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/pdf/AmutaComplaintMichaelLynkManalTamimi.pdf>

Finally recognizing the harmful effects of this government support for antisemitism, however, the European Union has begun to take action.

Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) definition

In May 2017, the European Parliament adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. The definition provides examples of contemporary antisemitism such as claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor; applying double standards to Israel not expected or demanded of any other nation; and using symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism to characterize Israel or Israelis:

- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel.

The adoption of the IHRA definition will provide an important benchmark by the European Commission and EU member states. We believe the UN should also adopt the IHRA standard and use it as a metric to evaluate UN-supported activities and funding. Activities, committees, and programs that violate the definition should be ineligible to use UN resources (i.e. UN facilities, promotion on UN websites, PR for events, printing) or to receive UN funding.

Implementing Decision Guidelines for Civil Society Funding

Another important development in the EU is the enacting of guidelines related to CSO/NGO funding. In December 2017, the European Commission adopted an Implementing Decision for its Annual Programme of Action for Palestine, emphasizing that “particular attention will be paid to prevent that EU-supported civil society organisations are also engaged in activities inciting to hatred and/or violence” and conditioning eligibility for NGO funding on strict compliance with EU guidelines on racism.

The Implementing Decision marks a significant change in EU-NGO funding policies. Previously, this funding was provided all too often to groups that promote antisemitism and incitement to violence under the justification that the EU only funds projects and not organizations.

The UN should also adopt these guidelines and implement them on an institution-wide basis, particularly in frameworks such as the Division of Palestinian Rights, UNRWA, and OCHA.

Reformation of UN Reporting Processes

As mentioned, UN reports and activities often promote antisemitism because of their near exclusive reliance on unverified claims made by a very narrow group of politicized NGOs as their source material. The UN should adopt guidelines for reports requiring UN agencies, committees, and independent experts to consult a wide variety of actors, rather than the current uncritical reliance on political partisans and promoters of bigotry. NGOs that promote antisemitic imagery and rhetoric should be disqualified from contributing to the UN reporting processes.

Reformation of the UN Appointment Processes

Individuals who express bigotry or who have histories of antisemitic activism must be disqualified from applying for UN appointments, including UNHRC special procedures.

Adoption of Guidelines Linking Funding for UN Agencies to Compliance with Norms on Antisemitism

In 2016, the Canadian government coupled renewed funding for UNRWA with guidelines that explicitly prohibit the UN Agency and its employees from engaging in political advocacy in any form. In addition to promulgating these guidelines, Canada has followed up with a detailed program of monitoring and investigation in response to reports of violations. This model would also be appropriate for ensuring that UN agencies and their employees are not involved in any way in antisemitic activities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the extensive involvement of UN agencies and officials in promoting antisemitism, the Institute for NGO Research urges the Secretary General to adopt the following recommendations in his report:

- The UN, across all agencies, should adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism and the EU's Implementing Decision Guidelines as metrics for evaluation of all UN activities, events, appointments, and funding.
- The UN should encourage all member states to adopt the IHRA definition and EU Implementing Decision Guidelines.
- UN agencies and their employees involved in any form of antisemitic activity should be disqualified from receiving funding. In addition, UN agencies found to be promoting antisemitism must be placed under immediate investigation, penalized where appropriate, and monitored with on-going supervision. Employees promoting antisemitism should be immediately disciplined.
- Funding mechanisms for NGOs by UN and its member states must have full transparency, including public access to the decision making processes, documents, and all evaluations.
- Funding for NGOs engaging in antisemitism should be immediately halted, and the NGO should be disqualified from future funding from the UN and its member states.
- The UN should take an immediate and comprehensive overhaul of its funding to NGOs operating the Arab-Israeli conflict to ensure current funding is not being used to promote antisemitism. The Jewish community must be included in this process. The UN should encourage its member states to do the same.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Herzberg
UN Liaison, Institute for NGO Research
Legal Advisor, NGO Monitor