Prof. Anne Bayefsky: UN report blames Israel, not Hamas, for starvation of hostages

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Professor Anne Bayefsky, Director of the Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust and President of Human Rights Voices, spoke to Arutz Sheva - Israel National News about a newly-released United Nations [report](https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/262/79/pdf/n2426279.pdf) downplaying the atrocities Hamas committed during the October 7 massacre while excoriating Israel for its response to the massacre.

"The United Nations has just released a report that is a full-throated effort to emasculate the Jewish state and terrorize its supporters. The new report was produced by a UN 'Commission of Inquiry' created by the UN 'Human Rights' Council back in 2021. It is headed by the notoriously anti-Israel campaigner, Navi Pillay, the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights," Prof. Bayefsky said.

"Pillay, along with two other inquisitors, Chris Sidoti and Miloon Kothari, wrote the report as the second volume of their analysis of 'the attacks that occurred on 7 October 2023 and thereafter,'" she added.

Prof. Bayefsky continued, "The inquiry’s agenda was made plain from volume one, which was issued in June of this year. Released after months of so-called investigation, the report multiplied the trauma suffered by Jewish women and girls and their families. 'Concerning rape,' the inquisitors said, 'the Commission…has not been able to independently verify such allegations' and 'the Commission was also unable to verify reports of sexualized torture and genital mutilation.'"

"The UN 'experts' couldn’t verify the atrocities that Palestinian terrorists themselves had no shame in video-taping and sharing online with the world," she said.

She added, "The newest report takes the UN inquiry’s strategy of systematic deceit and massive legal fraud even farther."

According to Prof. Bayefsky, "Even the most elementary aspects of the Palestinian Arab-Israeli conflict – whose 'root causes' the inquiry is tasked with uncovering – escapes these UN 'experts.' The 1949 armistice lines meant that Egypt occupied Gaza and that Jordan occupied the West Bank until 1967. But in their report, the inquisitors object to 'the 75-year long Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.'"

"What else did this UN team come up with in their passion to shorten Israel’s longevity? We know about Hamas use of hospitals for military purposes. Photographic and video evidence, among other things, shows: tunnels directly below hospitals that utilized the power sources and served as command centers and weapons depots; weapons on hospital floors alongside patient wards; and weapons hidden in incubators. We also know that Hamas built and uses a vast underground tunnel network for terror," she noted.

"But not Navi Pillay. Her report says: *'The Commission interviewed senior medical personnel at hospitals and they denied that there was any military activity, emphasizing that the hospitals’ only role was to treat patients.'* Her report concludes: *'The Commission confirmed the presence of a tunnel and shaft on the grounds of Shifa Hospital, but it could not verify that they were used for military purposes,'”* she said.

"To repeat: there was a tunnel and a shaft between the tunnel and the hospital, but apparently it might have been for fun, sport and entertainment.

Prof. Bayefsky noted, "We also know what happened to some Israeli hostages in Gazan hospitals. Former Israeli hostages Maya and Itay Regev describe the excruciating treatment of botched 'surgeries,' procedures done without anesthesia, and the use of chlorine and vinegar in wounds to maximize pain."

"Their ordeal didn’t make the cut into Pillay’s report. Instead, speaking of Al-Shifa Hospital, the report regurgitates: *'Hamas…stated that the hostages had been transported there for medical treatment,'"* she stated.

"Instead of the reality of being tortured, the inquisitors concluded that the hostages were being 'treated': *'The Commission confirmed that two hostages had been held in hospitals and received medical treatment for their wounds.'*

According to Prof. Bayefsky, "We know that Al-Shifa Hospital was being used 'in a manner harmful to the enemy' which made it 'a military objective which can legitimately be attacked,' while still weighing additional relevant considerations. That’s what international law says, but not the Pillay inquiry. The inquisitors concluded their hospital analysis by analogizing Israelis to Nazis: *'The Commission also concludes that such acts constitute the crime against humanity of extermination.'"*

"We know that Israel found six hostages dead in a Gazan tunnel on September 1, 2024 – their bodies decimated by prolonged starvation, lack of daylight and access to air. And we know that they had been executed not long before Israeli forces arrived on the scene with shots to the back of the head.

She stated, "Pillay’s response to the deaths of hostages in Gaza was to chide Israel for killing hostages (in what Israel admitted was a tragic mistake). Referring to the six who had been deliberately executed, however, the inquisitors could find no one to blame. On the contrary, the report focuses on what happened after the executed hostages were found:*'On 2 September, Hamas stated that new instructions had been issued regarding dealing with hostages if Israeli security forces approached their place of detention.'"*

She asked, "Who talks about cold-blooded executions as 'dealing' with people? Evidently, UN mobsters. Pillay’s report refused to say that Hamas’s 'instructions' were to execute their captives or even that Hamas was their executioner."

"In reality, Hamas had issued those 'new' instructions back in June (after the IDF successfully rescued four hostages)," she said.

"We know that the hostages have been systematically deprived of food and the necessities of life since their capture. Horrifyingly, the body of executed hostage 24-year old Eden Yerushalmi was found to weigh only 79 pounds.

She stated, "Sickeningly, the UN inquisitors blamed Israel for the hostages’ starvation. In the report’s words:*'The siege imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip has reduced the availability of food, water and medicine to the population at large, including the hostages.'"*

"Despite Israel’s enormous efforts to feed Gazans, and Hamas’s efforts to pillage and prosper from the shipments, Pillay’s June 2024 report said that*'Israel has used starvation as a method of war.*' On the other hand, the inquisitors could find no evidence that Hamas was using starvation as a weapon of war," she stated.

Professor Bayefsky noted, "We know that human shielding is a central pillar of Palestinian terrorism strategy. Former Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh wasn’t subtle about it. He explained to media outlets on October 26, 2023 (recorded by MEMRI): 'The blood of the women, children and elderly…we are the ones who need this blood, so it awakens within us the revolutionary spirit.'”

According to her, "Pillay’s inquisition was uninterested in the millions of Palestinians harmed by Palestinians. Instead, gaslighting is her go-to formula. In the words of the report: '*Israeli security forces used detainees as human shields in several instances in the West Bank and Gaza, which constitutes a war crime.'* The report never condemns Hamas for using Palestinian civilians as human shields."

"We know that Hamas has the stated objective of genocide, of eradicating the Jewish state and its people. And yet, Pillay’s report concludes with this advice to Hamas: *'The de facto authority in Gaza has the responsibility of investigating possible violations of international law and holding the perpetrators accountable.'*

"This simply beggars the imagination," she said. "First, the UN gang invents a moral conscience where none exists, and concocts a moral equivalence between a terrorist organization and a democratic society. And then it tells Hamas mass murderer Yahya Sinwar and his crew to hold themselves accountable for killing Jews notwithstanding their stated objective is killing Jews."

"The report ends with an appeal to all UN Member States to join their hot pursuit of Israelis at the International Criminal Court and beyond. They euphemistically refer to this pogrom as accountability," she said.

"It is time to issue a different appeal – to hold Navi Pillay, Chris Sidoti and Miloon Kothari accountable for their criminal incitement of terrorism and dissemination of lethal antisemitism," Prof. Bayeksky concluded.