# Legal Expert Slams Hypocrisy of UN’s “Unprecedented” Israel Blacklist

June 20, 2017

The Tower

http://www.thetower.org/5108-legal-expert-slams-hypocrisy-of-uns-unprecedented-israel-blacklist/

Northwestern University Law Professor Eugene Kontorovich presented the United Nations Human Rights Council on Monday with a report documenting business dealings in occupied territories around the world, underscoring the hypocrisy behind the council’s decision to compile a blacklist only of companies operating in the West Bank.

In a presentation explaining the study, Kontorovich, who also heads the International Law Department at the Kohelet Policy Forum, observed that some 44 companies from countries including Sweden, Switzerland, France and Germany operate in different occupied territories around the world.

“The study reveals that international businesses play a crucial role supporting occupation and settlement enterprises around the world in places such as Western Sahara, Northern Cyprus, Nagorno-Karabakh and Crimea,” Kontorovich said, but “the Council has never condemned any of this business activity.”

The study describes the blacklist, which was approved by the UN earlier this year, as “absolutely unprecedented” and warns that it could ultimately be used to sanction companies operating in areas of the West Bank under Israeli control. Noting that there is no similar list of companies operating in any other occupied territory, Kontorovih asserted that “the activity the Council treats as criminal when Israel is involved is regarded as unremarkable anywhere else.”

He added that the blacklist of Israeli companies operating in the West Bank is “based on a false premise that businesses violate human rights when the work in an occupied territory. The Council itself does not really believe that.” He illustrated this by observing, “The two countries that depend on business support for their settlement enterprises, Turkey (Northern Cyprus) and Morocco (Western Sahara), both voted for the Israel blacklist.”

Consequently, the blacklist can’t be said to be the result of a universal application of the principles of international law, but “a specific effort to delegitimize Israel.”

Kontorovich warned that compiling a blacklist of companies operating in the West Bank could have implications for companies operating in other occupied territories, because though “the Council wants to confine this to Israel,” the “law knows no borders.”

“The extensive business activity in occupied territory around the world, which goes unmentioned by the UN and NGOs, demonstrates the utter indifference to human rights that are not tied to the UN’s obsessive and politicized focus on Israel,” Anne Herzberg, legal advisor to NGO Monitor, said in a statement released by the group ahead of Kontorovich’s presentation. “International law does not prohibit businesses from operating in occupied territories, yet UN bureaucracy is again mobilized to deliberately target Israel.”

Kontrovich in June 2015 critiqued French telecom operator Orange for pulling out of Israel, ostensibly because it didn’t want to operate in occupied territories, while maintaining its presence in Nagorno-Karabakh, which is illegally occupied by Armenia.

In October 2015, it was revealed that a prominent activist advocating for the boycott of Israel was on the board of a group that supported the illegal occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh.