Israel fumes as UN secretary-general leaves Hamas off sexual violence blacklist

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Foreign Minister Israel Katz accused United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres of standing ‘shoulder to shoulder with the rapists and murderers of Hamas’ for declining to include the terror group in a report published Tuesday on organizations suspected by the UN of committing acts of sexual violence during conflict.

The document, titled ‘Conflict-related sexual violence,’ and published as a ‘Report of the Secretary-General,’ noted there is evidence that sex crimes were committed during the Palestinian terror group Hamas’s devastating October 7 attack on Israel, but did not specifically attribute responsibility to Hamas.

The ministry elaborated in the statement that Guterres ignored ‘the plethora of testimony and evidence that was collected and then included in [the report](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-finds-evidence-of-rape-on-oct-7-and-after-israel-they-tried-to-downplay-issue/) of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten.’

Patten’s report after her visit to Israel found that rape likely occurred during the Hamas attacks, and said there was convincing evidence hostages were facing sexual abuse in Gaza.

In his report, Guterres referenced Patten’s assessment, but noted that it, ‘not being investigative in nature and given its limited duration, did not draw conclusions on attribution to specific armed groups or determine prevalence of incidents of conflict-related sexual violence during and after the attacks of 7 October. Such a determination would require a fully-fledged investigation.’

Guterres, fumed Katz, refused to acknowledge Hamas’s responsibility for the grave sexual crimes that appear in the Patten report and to declare it a terrorist organization.

‘I am convinced that if the crimes of the Nazi regime had come up for discussion during his tenure, he would have refused to condemn them as well, if his political interests demanded that,’ the minister said in a statement published by the Foreign Ministry. ‘Guterres has turned the UN into an extremely antisemitic and anti-Israel institution, and his time in office will be remembered as the darkest in the organization’s history.’

On October 7, the Palestinian terror group Hamas led a massive cross-border attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, amid numerous atrocities.

Some 3,000 attackers burst through the boundary with the Gaza Strip to rampage murderously through southern Israel amid widespread gang rape, torture and mutilation of victims, according to numerous witnesses and robust evidence. Terrorists also abducted 253 people of all ages who were taken as hostages in Gaza.

Patten, the UN’s envoy on sex crimes during conflict, last month [presented a report](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-finds-evidence-of-rape-on-oct-7-and-after-israel-they-tried-to-downplay-issue/) at the UN indicating that rape and gang rape likely occurred during the October 7 Hamas onslaught, that ‘clear and convincing’ evidence shows that hostages were raped while being held in Gaza, and that those currently held captive are still facing such abuse.

While Patten’s report ‘explicitly recognized the connection between Hamas’s October 7th attack and the horrific acts of sexual violence that were carried out in a systematic and deliberate manner,’ the ministry said, ‘the UN secretary-general refrained from attributing responsibility to the Hamas terrorist organization. This report constitutes a miserable and tragic testimony to the inadequacy of the functioning of the UN and its leader since October 7th, and it provides encouragement to terrorism and violence.’

The Ynet outlet, in an unsourced report, said Israeli representatives spoke with UN officials about Hamas not being blacklisted and were told that there is a process to include an organization in the roster that involves identifying a trend and then specific cases. UN officials also pointed out that there has not yet been a full investigation of the October 7 attacks and asserted that it was not possible to determine if Hamas planned sexual crimes as part of its attack, or if they were carried out spontaneously by individuals, including Gazans who entered Israel while trailing the attacking terrorists.

Patten delivered her own [remarks](https://reliefweb.int/report/world/remarks-srsg-pramila-patten-security-council-open-debate-preventing-conflict-related-sexual-violence-through-demilitarization-and-gender-responsive-arms-control-new-york-23-april-2024) Tuesday to the Security Council in a debate on ‘Preventing conflict-related sexual violence through demilitarization and gender-responsive arms control.’

In her address, Patten noted that, for the first time, the secretary-general’s conflict-related sexual violence report included a section on Israel and the Palestinian territories.

She reiterated her findings: ‘Following the 7th of October attacks by Hamas, other armed groups, and armed civilians, I visited Israel at the invitation of the government. My team and I confirmed that there are reasonable grounds to believe that conflict-related sexual violence occurred in at least three locations, and that sexual violence has been committed against individuals held as hostages and may be ongoing.’

‘Regarding the occupied West Bank, according to UN-verified information, the arrests and detention of Palestinian women and men by Israeli security forces, following the 7th of October attacks, have often been accompanied by ill-treatment, including forms of sexual violence. Similar allegations have emerged from Gaza,’ she said.

Before Guterres’s report was published, Israel’s envoy to the UN Gilad Erdan sent a letter to the secretary-general in which he expressed ‘Israel’s disappointment and shock’ that Hamas was not on the blacklist, according to Hebrew media reports on the missive.

Erdan said that Israel sees the inclusion of Hamas as ‘an inevitable result of the Patten report’ and urged Guterres to ‘re-examine your position, include Hamas in the aforementioned list and clearly attribute the responsibility for October 7, and the sexual violence that followed, to Hamas.’

Regarding the allegations of inappropriate behavior toward Palestinians in detention, Erdan said they are being investigated according to procedure, but also cast doubt on their veracity.

‘These allegations were made in a clear attempt to ‘balance’ the heinous crimes of Hamas with inappropriate behavior by Israel, apparently for purely political reasons,’ he argued.

‘The brutality and sexual violence of Hamas have been proven beyond a shadow of a doubt and any attempt to compare the sexual barbarism of terrorists with accusations against the law-abiding state of Israel is immoral and despicable,’ he added.