Jewish Organizations Outraged Over Anti-Semitic Remarks by UN Human Rights Council Inquiry Member

July 28, 2022

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**The Jewish Voice**

<https://thejewishvoice.com/2022/07/jewish-organizations-outraged-over-anti-semitic-remarks-by-un-human-rights-council-member/>

A top UN official said Monday that Israel should be thrown out of the UN due to the way it treats both Israeli Arabs and Palestinians, in a report by anti-Israel media site Mondoweiss.

“I would go as far as to raise the question of why [Israel is] even a member of the United Nations, because… the Israeli government does not respect its own obligations as a UN member state,” said Miloon Kothari, one of three members of the Human Rights Council’s Commission of Inquiry on the ‘Occupied Palestinian Territory’ (OPT).

Charging that Israel “is in systematic violation” of “humanitarian law, human rights law, criminal law,” he said, “They, in fact, consistently, either directly or through the United States, try to undermine UN mechanisms.”

The Commission came out last month with its first report on the origin of the Middle East conflict, pointing to the “perpetual occupation” of the regions Israel liberated during 1967’s Six Day War as “the underlying root cause of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict.”

It blasted Israeli behavior regarding Palestinians both “within Israel” as well as the OPT, charging Israel with “longstanding discrimination” all the way back to the state’s founding and not just since 1967.

No recognition is made in the report of the disputed nature of the territory, to which Israel has a strong, legal claim according to many international legal scholars.

Neither is any mention made of the tens of thousands of rockets Palestinians have fired indiscriminately into Israel over recent years or the ongoing terrorist attacks, which is the reason for the defensive measures Israel practices to protect its citizens – Arab and Jewish alike.

Kothari went even further than the initial report in condemning Israel, saying, “Apartheid is a useful paradigm/framework to understand the situation but not sufficient.”

“Ending ‘apartheid’ will not end the crisis of occupation for the Palestinian peoples,” he added, lumping Arab citizens of Israel together with the Arabs living in the Palestinian Authority-administered territories.

The Commission would get to the apartheid issue, he promised, as well as “tackle this issue of how far you can take antisemitism.”

**‘From the river to the sea’**

Twice during the interview, Kothari mentioned investigating the human rights situation “from the river to the sea.” This expression is considered antisemitic as it is used by Israel’s foes to promote the elimination of the Jewish state in its entirety – from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea – rather than the establishment of a Palestinian state in Judea and Samaria.

Kothari also used a classic antisemitic trope when he criticized efforts by countries such as the U.S. and Canada to stop the Commission’s work.

“We are very disheartened by the social media that is controlled largely by – whether it’s the Jewish lobby or it’s specific NGOs, a lot of money is being thrown into trying to discredit us,” he said.

Prof. Anne Bayefsky, a prominent Canadian lawyer and human rights expert who heads the Touro College Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust, was not surprised by Kothari’s statements.

He and his fellow Commission members had been appointed “precisely because of their very well-known bias against Israel – which this interview obviously confirms,” she said Tuesday, as reported in conservative American news site CNSNews.

Kothari’s statements, she added, were “a grotesque display of antisemitism.”

“The legitimacy of this UN inquiry is shot,” she said. “It is an ‘inquiry’ supposedly about ‘systematic discrimination’ whose purpose and practice is to engage in systematic discrimination – against the Jewish state and Jews.”

Jerusalem has refused to cooperate in any way with the UN investigation, citing its “discriminatory and biased” nature,and its unprecedented mandate to be permanent and open-ended.

The Commission’s next report is set to be presented to the UN General Assembly in October.

The Times of Israel reported that the Bnai Brith International organization has called for the dismissal of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry set up following the May 2021 conflict between Israel and Gaza terror groups over recent “odious remarks” by some of its members and “other blatant violations.”

In a statement on Wednesday, B’nai B’rith International President Seth J. Riklin said: “The UN is charged to uphold fairness and neutrality in its work, but is this commission fair and neutral? Clearly not.”

Israel has previously said it will not cooperate with the commission, saying its members “have repeatedly taken public and hostile positions against Israel on the very subject matter that they are called upon to ‘independently and impartially’ investigate,” as was reported by the TOI.

In the statement, B’nai B’rith cited the recent comments made by Kothari.

“It’s not only governments. We are very disheartened by the social media that is controlled largely by – whether it is the Jewish lobby or specific NGOs. A lot of money is being thrown into trying to discredit us,” Kothari said.

On Wednesday, the Simon Wiesenthal Center penned a letter to Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the United States’ ambassador to the United Nations, to urge US action against a UN Commission of Inquiry

The letter, which was sent directly to the ambassador, addresses the comments made by Kothari.

Kothari also questioned why Israel is a member of the United Nations. “They [Israel], in fact, consistently, either directly or through the United States, try to undermine UN mechanisms,” Kothari charged.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center’s letter to Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield urges the ambassador to “publicly denounce Kothari’s libelous statements, false accusations, and anti-Jewish remarks against America’s ally, Israel, and the Jewish people.”

“The Simon Wiesenthal Center also requests that the administration voice full support for proposed bipartisan legislation in Congress to eliminate the anti-Israel Commission of Inquiry,” the letter concludes.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center is also speaking with Congressional leaders on both sides of the isle to prevent Kothari from entering the United States and lobbying support for the UN’s unprecedented inquisition of the Jewish state.

A statement on this matter was also issued by Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid’s international spokeswoman Angered by the patently anti-Semitic remarks by UN Commission of Inquiry member Miloon Kothari, the prime minister’s office said:

“The international community should be outraged by Miloon Kothari’s antisemitic comments.

His racist remarks about “the Jewish Lobby” that controls the media and his questioning Israel’s right to exist as a member of the family of nations – echo the darkest days of antisemitism.

The Commission of Inquiry is the epitome of moral hypocrisy.

It makes a mockery of the UN Human Rights Council’s own supposed standards of independence and impartiality.

The evidence is clear: this illegitimate and biased Commission must be disbanded and its commissioners disqualified from UN work.”