UN Official Running Investigation Into Israel Defends Colleague Who Said Jewish Lobby Controls Social Media

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<https://freebeacon.com/latest-news/un-leader-backs-official-who-said-jewish-lobby-controls-social-media/>

The United Nations official in charge of an investigation into Israel is standing by a colleague who came under fire this week for claiming social media platforms are controlled by a "Jewish lobby."

Navi Pillay, chairwoman of the U.N. investigation into alleged Israeli human rights crimes, says her colleague, Miloon Kothari, is being unfairly accused of anti-Semitism after he stated in an interview this week that social media are controlled by an all-powerful "Jewish lobby" that throws around "a lot of money."

Pillay defended the remarks, saying in a letter sent Thursday to the president of the U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC), which helms the Israel investigation, that Kothari was "deliberately misquoted." A copy of the letter, which was written after the UNHRC's president raised concerns about the comments, was provided to the *Washington Free Beacon* by U.N. officials.

Kothari was "deliberately misquoted to imply that ‘social media' was controlled by the Jewish lobby," Pillay says in the letter, though she does not specify how Kothari was misquoted. Pillay also said that those critical of Kothari's comments are attempting to discredit the U.N. investigation into Israel, which has been dogged by accusations it is biased and fueled by animosity toward the Jewish state.

"The commission takes great exception to personal attacks against individual commissioners appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council. Such attacks have been continuously directed against all three commissioners throughout our tenure, and it is to this that Commissioner Kothari was making reference," Pillay wrote.

Kothari in an interview with the anti-Zionist website Mondoweiss said the "Jewish lobby" is behind social media efforts attempting to discredit the ongoing probe into Israel.

"We are very disheartened by the social media that is controlled largely by whether it's the Jewish lobby or it's the specific [nonprofit groups]," Kothari said. "A lot of money is being thrown into trying to discredit us."

Kothari also questioned Israel's membership in the United Nations.

"I would go as far as to raise the question of why [Israel is] even a member of the United Nations," he said. "The Israeli government does not respect its own obligations as a U.N. member state. They, in fact, consistently, either directly or through the United States, try to undermine U.N. mechanisms."

Kothari's comments were labeled anti-Semitic by pro-Israel groups, the*Free Beacon* [reported](https://freebeacon.com/latest-news/un-official-investigating-israel-jewish-lobby-controls-social-media/) on Wednesday.

Pillay in her letter launched attacks on the Israeli government for its refusal to cooperate with the investigation, which Israel is boycotting due to concerns the commission is trying to demonize the Jewish state.

"The commission continues to highlight the refusal of Israel to cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry as well as abide by its international obligations to end the occupation and fulfill the right of Palestinians to self-determination," Pillay wrote.

"Commissioner Kothari's comments reflect the commission's disappointment with the continued lack of cooperation and address the issue that as a member of the United Nations, Israel is under an obligation to abide by the international legal framework, as well as independent bodies set up by the United Nations," Pillay wrote.

Pillay also defended Commissioner Christopher Sidoti, who came under fire in recent weeks for comments that Israeli officials called anti-Semitic.

A U.N. Human Rights Council spokesman told the *Free Beacon* that it has a zero-tolerance policy on anti-Semitism.

"The Human Rights Council takes a vigilant stance against anti-Semitism, including any comments or actions seen as stigmatizing the Jewish people," the official said. "The council has a long track record speaking out against all forms of discrimination and racism and vehemently condemns such abhorrent acts."

U.S. officials at the United Nations, including Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism Deborah Lipstadt, said on Thursday that Kothari's comments represent a "persistent venom" that has "poisoned" the international body.

"Anti-Semitism and anti-Israel bias are a persistent venom that for far too long has poisoned international discourse and polluted international organizations, including the United Nations," Lipstadt said in a [joint statement](https://geneva.usmission.gov/2022/07/28/statement-on-antisemitic-remarks-by-a-commissioner-of-the-israel-coi/) with Michèle Taylor, the U.S. permanent representative to the U.N. Human Rights Council.  "The United States condemns it unequivocally."

Kothari's comments, Lipstadt and Taylor said, echo "age-old anti-Semitic tropes" and are "outrageous, inappropriate, and corrosive."

Anne Bayefsky, president of Human Rights Voices and director of Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust, which combats anti-Semitism, said Pillay's letter demonstrates the entire Israel commission is biased.

"The letter of Navi Pillay defending the clearly outrageous anti-Semitic remarks of her colleague on the U.N. Human Rights Council inquiry makes one thing abundantly clear: The problem isn't just Kothari," Bayefsky said. "The problem is the inquiry itself and all three of its members starting with Pillay herself. The very reason that Pillay, Kothari, and Chris Sidoti were chosen for the job was because they are all well-known wildly anti-Israel militants. Their appointments were totally at odds with U.N. requirements of impartiality and objectivity."