Fighting the Blight of Durban

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By Richard Kemp

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<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/17601/durban-un-israel>

This week, Ronald S. Lauder, former US ambassador to Austria and currently president of the World Jewish Congress, sent an open letter to US President Joe Biden setting out his concerns about rising antisemitism. "Recently, American Jews have witnessed something we never thought we would see in this country," he wrote; "...a Jewish man wearing a yarmulke cannot walk down an American street without fear of violence. Jews have been attacked by pro-Palestinian mobs in Los Angeles, New York and other cities. Antisemitic incidents have more than doubled in the past year. Hate crimes against Jews in America are twice as high as crimes against any other religious group".

In Britain, the Community Security Trust, a charity that monitors antisemitism and provides security for the Jewish community, [reports](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/campaigners-jewish-community-security-trust-israel-none-b938422.html) that racist attacks against Jews in May this year "surpassed anything we have seen before", with more antisemitic incidents than in any single month since records began in 1986. In London, a convoy of vehicles drove through Jewish areas brandishing Palestinian flags and screaming at passers-by to kill Jews and rape their daughters. According to the UK charity Campaign Against Antisemitism, recent examples of hostility include physical beatings and vandalism, chants and placards at rallies, social media abuse and threats to Jewish children at schools and universities.

Similar antisemitic attacks have been on the increase around the world from Buenos Aires to Brussels. In a speech this week Israel's Foreign Minister Yair Lapid [said](https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/lapid-blames-failed-israeli-pr-for-rise-in-antisemitism-israel-bashing-674869): "Antisemitism has reached a peak that has not been seen since World War II".

This recent spike in aggression against Jews was fuelled by intensive antisemitic propaganda during the May 2021 Gaza conflict initiated by Iran-backed Hamas, a proscribed terrorist group that fired around 4,500 rockets, mortars and anti-tank missiles at Israel [in 11 days](https://gottheimer.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=2557). (For comparison, the average daily rate of fire was four times that achieved by Germany in its V1 rocket attacks against England in the Second World War.)

Hamas started this war as part of its power struggle with Fatah, the party that dominates the Palestinian Authority. But its missile tactics and other acts of aggression — seen repeatedly since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 — were also intended to engender an Israeli reaction that would unavoidably lead to the deaths of Palestinian civilians, and in turn provoke vilification against the Jewish state and its isolation from the international community.

The systematically orchestrated antisemitic attacks we see around the world today are in part the fruits of this political warfare strategy against Israel and their proliferation reflects the success of Hamas's plan as well as the words and actions of its fellow travellers including Iran, Qatar, Turkey, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hizballah and Fatah.

All of this takes place and is legitimised within a wider international political web with the United Nations, spider-like, at its centre. Under the instigation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, at the end of the Gaza conflict the obedient UN Human Rights Council resolved to create a permanent "Commission of Inquiry" into Israel's treatment of Palestinians, the only [open-ended inquisition](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-rights-council-orders-unprecedented-open-ended-probe-of-israel/) of its kind against any country in the world. Its findings are sickeningly certain even before they are written.

In September we will also witness the next iteration of the UN's infamous 20-year-old showpiece vendetta against Israel: Durban IV, a one-day event at the heads-of-state and government level during the UN General Assembly.

This proceeding marks the anniversary of the Durban Declaration made at the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia and Intolerance. Shocking even for this corrupt and deeply flawed world body, the conference was itself characterised by racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance — the direct opposite of its declared purpose. In one hate-filled speech after another, Israel was falsely accused of racism, ethnic cleansing, apartheid and genocide.

Durban has been [described](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G21/165/04/PDF/G2116504.pdf?OpenElement) by the non-governmental organisation UN Watch as "the worst international manifestation of antisemitism in the post-war period". The conference and subsequent linked events in 2009 and 2011 have served to legitimise Jew-hate everywhere, with antisemitic material distributed and Holocaust denial a prominent feature. Israel was the only country singled out as racist in the closing declaration. Durban II in 2009 was planned under the chairmanship of Colonel Muammar Gadaffi's Libyan regime; in the opening speech, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinajad asserted that "World Zionism personifies racism". He [claimed](https://unwatch.org/countries-rejecting-durban-iv-updates-analysis-more/) the Holocaust was an "ambiguous and dubious question" and a "pretext" for oppressing Palestinians.

Durban IV will re-energise this shameful process. The UN General Assembly [draft resolution](https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/germany-will-boycott-the-durban-iv-conference-67483) calls on member states to "reaffirm the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted in 2001... and reaffirm our commitment to its full and effective implementation". In other words, an orgy of Jew-hate.

Fifteen UN member states boycotted Durban III in 2011 and so far 10 countries have announced they will not attend Durban IV: Israel, US, Canada, Australia, UK, Germany, Hungary, Austria, Netherlands and the Czech Republic. France, Italy, Bulgaria, New Zealand and Poland, each of which refused to attend in 2011, have yet to declare their intentions.

Durban IV will further empower anti-Israel political leaders around the globe. In his open letter to President Biden, Amb. Lauder accused "several members of the US Congress — under the guise of criticising Israel" of embracing "age-old anti-Jewish vulgarities" and turning them loose on the digital world. He continued: "In attacking Israel, these elected representatives give credence to long discredited and vile antisemitic slurs... They are carefully and deliberately chosen words originating in the halls of the US Congress".

We see the same Jew hate among politicians — mainly on the left — in the British parliament and legislatures elsewhere. Such malignant doctrine is also delivered by leaders and academics in human rights groups, universities, schools and the media. Lauder has called on President Biden to take the lead against this vitriol in the US by declaring such hatred beyond the pale of human decency. He says the US President is the one man in the country who can make a difference in this critical moment. He is right and the same applies to presidents and prime ministers everywhere.

It does not, however, go far enough. It is not adequate for heads of government just to reject Jew-hate and the antisemitic condemnation of Israel by those who flaunt Palestinian flags while yelling slogans like "from the river to the sea", meaning the eradication of the Jewish state. The US, Australia and some other Western countries gave staunch support to Israel during the recent Gaza war.

But too many, as so often, equivocated, showing their bias against the Jewish state as they would against no other sovereign democratic nation defending itself against terrorism. At the start of the conflict for example, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson echoed the standard banalities churned out by many national leaders: "I am urging Israel and the Palestinians to step back from the brink and for both sides to show restraint". Why is that biased? It implies equivalence between the two sides when there is none. The unprecedented barrage of lethal missiles fired from Gaza at Israeli civilians was completely unprovoked.

Anything less than full support for Israel's vital and lawful defensive actions amounts to encouragement of violence by Hamas and tacit approval of its actions. Leaders who fail to support Israel and condemn these terrorists share culpability not just for antisemitic hate in their own countries but also for an increasingly violent cycle in the Middle East in which the greatest victims are Palestinian civilians, betrayed and endangered by the vicious actions of their own leadership. Although many political leaders have spoken out against Jew-hate, their failure to both publicly condemn Hamas and vigorously support Israel's defensive actions gives credence to the poisonous propaganda of the street thugs in their own countries and green lights their antisemitic aggression.

When the Gaza conflict began, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz hoisted the Israeli flag on the roof of the federal chancellery in Vienna as a sign of solidarity with Israel's fight. "The terrorist attacks on Israel," he [wrote](https://ejpress.org/israels-flag-risen-on-the-roof-of-austrias-chancellery/), "are to be condemned in the strongest possible terms! Together we stand by Israel's side". Kurz also powerfully opposes the Durban process, rejecting its misuse "to unfairly single out and target Israel". Leaders who lack this kind of resolve both against those who fire rockets at Israel from Gaza and those who incite against the Jewish state at the UN are failing in their duties to their own citizens and to Western democratic civilisation.