Pressure grows on UN investigator to resign after Jewish Lobby remark

August 1, 2022

By Tovah Lazaroff

The Jerusalem Post

<https://www.jpost.com/international/article-713676>

Pressure grew Monday on United Nations investigator Miloon Kothari to resign for reasons of antisemitism after he made reference to the Jewish Lobby in an interview he gave to the Mondoweiss website last week. Kothari also questioned why Israel was a UN member.

At least 11 countries, as well as the European Union and top UN officials, have condemned Kothari’s use of the term Jewish Lobby, which is reminiscent of the [antisemitic](https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-713501) trope that Jews control the world, particularly given that there is no such organization.

Austria, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Hungary, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States and Israel have [all issued statements](https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-713568#:~:text=unhrc%20president%20federico,treatment%20of%20israel.%e2%80%9d).

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres “has always been extremely clear in saying that there is no antisemitism in the work of the United Nations,” his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

Dujarric also affirmed that “Israel is unquestionably a member of the UN with the same rights and responsibilities as the 192 countries that make up this organization.

Kothari is one of three investigators on the UN Human Rights Council’s Commission of Inquiry on Israel. The other two investigators are Christopher Sidoti and Navi Pillay who chairs the COI. On Sunday Israeli Prime Minister Yair [Lapid asked Guterres to remove all three investigators](https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-713575%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) from their positions and to disband the COI.

Dujarric clarified that “the Secretary-General has no authority over the COI whose members are appointed by the Human Rights Council.”

UNHRC President [Fredrico Villegas](https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-713501%22%20%5Cl%20%22%3A~%3Atext%3D%E2%80%9Ci%20respectfully%20suggest%20that%20commissioner%20kothari%20consider%20the%20possibility%20of%20publicly%20clarifying%20his%20unfortunate%20comments%20and%20his%20intentions%20behind%20them%2C%E2%80%9D%20said%20villegas%2C%20who%20is%20argentina%E2%80%99s%20ambassador%20to%20the%20un%20in%20geneva%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) has already asked Kothari to clarify his comments, but he too lacks the authority to force him to retract them or remove him from his position.

UNHRC spokesman said that “it remains the sole decision of a member of the COI to step down from their position as they are independent experts.”

Former Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, who is now the UN High Represenative for the Alliance of Civilizations also spoke out against Kothari’s words.

“Words matter. Hate rhetoric is toxic. Therefore education about antisemitism is key to combating it in all its forms. It is also essential to agree on a definition on antisemitism,” Moratinos said.

“UNAOC” remains committed to take a firm stance against antisemitism including any comments or actions seen as stigmatizing the Jewish people.”

Outgoing UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief Ahmed Shaheed said that “Last May year, a foreign minister claimed that Israel controls the global media. Now this trope has come to the UN! The UN must take up my call to use  IHRA Working Definition for awareness-raising across the UN system, in line with international human rights standards.”

Defending Kothari

UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territory [Francesca Albanese](https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-703115), however, defended Kothari.

Albanese said that she stood in solidarity with the COI against the “preposterous allegations of antisemitism. The COI is mandated to investigate the root causes of violence [and] pursue accountability.”

She questioned whether or not this was the “real target of the smear campaign.”

Pillay last week said that Kothari’s comments were taken out of context and noted that the COI has been accused of antisemitism from the start of its work.

The COI has an opened ended mandate and intends among other things to investigate Israel for the crime of apartheid.