Israel: UN human rights office is a mouthpiece for Palestinian Authority

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<https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/article-715904>

Israel issued a blistering attack against the [United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet](https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-701949) in her last days in office, accusing her office of being a “mouthpiece for Palestinian Authority.”

The Israeli mission to the UN in Geneva, where Bachelet’s primary office is located, stated, “A cursory look at the UN Human Rights Office in Ramallah’s website or Facebook page reflects this uncomfortable truth.”

Israel, it recalled, had cut its ties with Bachelet’s office in 2020, after she published a “[blacklist](https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/un-publishes-blacklist-of-companies-with-ties-to-israeli-settlements-617384)” of companies that engaged with Israelis and Jewish entities located in West Bank settlements, east Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

Bachelet is due to end her four-year term on Wednesday and no replacement has been announced.

**Israeli authorities 'trying to hide something,' UN commissioner alleges**

On Tuesday, she attacked Israel for not issuing visas to her staff, who either need to visit or be located in Israel and Palestinian territories.

Bachelet explained that in 2020, the 15 international staff “of my office in Palestine – which has been operating in the country for 26 years – had no choice but to leave... subsequent requests for [visas and visa renewals](https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-708964) have gone unanswered for two years.”

“I have tried to find a solution to this situation, but Israel continues to refuse to engage,” Bachelet said, issuing a statement on the matter just two days before ending her four-year term.

Israel has not acted in good faith when it comes to processing visa applications, Bachelet said, adding that she called on the government “to meet its international obligations in this regard.”

As a UN member state, Israel has an obligation to grant entry to UN staff, Bachelet said. The visa issue comes at a time when [Israel is taking steps against human rights organizations](https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/article-715412) that operate in the Palestinian territories.

“This raises the question of what exactly the Israeli authorities are trying to hide,” she said, explaining that, among other things, the task of UN employees is to monitor human rights violations.

“We publicly report on violations by Israel, but also on violations by the state of Palestine, by Hamas in Gaza and Palestinian armed groups. We also provide the principal support to the Palestinian government, to help it improve its compliance with international human rights obligations,” Bachelet said.

“We will continue to deliver on our mandate. And we will continue to demand access to the occupied Palestinian territory for our staff, in line with Israel’s obligations as a UN Member State.”

**Israeli UN mission hits back at Bachelet's comments**

Israel’s mission to the UN retorted that “it is of little surprise that Michelle Bachelet is using her last hours in office to once again attack Israel and yet remain silent on the most serious human rights situations around the world.”

“Her words today are nothing more than a blatant attempt to rewrite the history and legacy of her time in the role of High Commissioner,” it added.

“Despite her claims, over the past two and a half years, her office has not engaged in genuine dialogue with Israel or provided any solutions or remedy to the situation she describes.

“She has also spent years, despite her claims today, refusing to name Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, and refusing to condemn violations of human rights by the Palestinians,” Israel’s mission to the UN stated.

Her office “has never intended to be anything but a mouthpiece for the Palestinian Authority,” it proclaimed.

Israel’s mission to the UN said it hoped that her replacement would undo the harm she had caused and finally commit “to eliminating the bias against Israel at the Human Rights Council.”