With Israel under attack, Biden must fight UN anti-Semitism

August 7, 2022

By David May and Richard Goldberg

The New York Post

<https://nypost.com/2022/08/07/with-israel-under-attack-biden-must-fight-un-anti-semitism/>

As the Iran-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad lobbed hundreds of rockets at Israel this weekend, [a UN Human Rights Council official took to Twitter](https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1555836586985676800) to denounce the Jewish state, labeling Israeli acts of self-defense against known terrorists “illegal,” “immoral” and “irresponsible.” These comments come as the council faces a full-blown anti-Semitism crisis over a commission assembled to delegitimize Israel.

Now is the time for the Biden administration to shut down that commission for good — and force countries to go on record on UN anti-Semitism.

In May 2021, after Hamas launched a war against Israel, the UN Human Rights Council established a three-member Commission of Inquiry to investigate baseless allegations of Israeli war crimes. No surprise there: The *usual* UN response to a terrorist group starting a war and targeting Israeli civilians is to investigate Israel.

But the council put a new twist on the latest commission’s warrant. In addition to examining last year’s conflict, the commission [has a permanent mandate](https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/UNHRC-Draft-Resolution-S30L.1-.pdf) to criticize Israel’s existence. With a first-year budget of $4 million and 18 staff, the commission [issued a preliminary report in June](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/commission-inquiry-occupied-palestinian-territory-including-east-jerusalem)recycling decades-old anti-Israel rhetoric and promising a follow-on report in months.

Systematically targeting the world’s only Jewish state is nothing new for the United Nations. But usually, it is done genteelly, posing as a curiously selective concern for human rights. Until now.

In an interview published in late July, Miloon Kothari, one of the commission’s three members,[expressed his resentment of](https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-713126) “the social media that is controlled largely by — whether it is the Jewish lobby or specific NGOs” and [the money they throw around](https://freebeacon.com/latest-news/un-leader-backs-official-who-said-jewish-lobby-controls-social-media/). That followed a second commission member, Chris Sidoti, [complaining that Jews and Israel](https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1q/k1qtlzmbs2)toss out accusations of anti-Semitism “like rice at a wedding.”

Remember that expert who blasted Israel for defending itself this weekend? Just a few days ago, [she expressed solidarity with the commission](https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1553034094296109056) and called allegations of anti-Semitism “preposterous” and a “smear campaign” to distract from its mission. Commission chair Navi Pillay was also outraged. Not by the commissioners’ inappropriate comments, but by the way Israel and “others” [took their words “out of context.”](https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1552740740471705602)

Pillay’s defense of anti-Semitism is nothing new. In 2008, as the UN’s High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Pillay lashed out at](https://www.un.org/en/durbanreview2009/pr_8-9-08.shtml) “certain lobby groups focused on single issues,” a coded reference to Jewish organizations, which were trying to block a follow-on to the wildly anti-Semitic (and ironically named) 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa. The event led to calls to make Israel a pariah, prompted a walkout by the United States and [“disintegrated into an anti-American, anti-Israeli circus,”](https://dl.tufts.edu/pdfviewer/r207v073p/tx31qt958)according to Holocaust survivor Rep. Tom Lantos, who was in attendance.

Pillay’s defense of her fellow commissioners’ remarks hasn’t prevented withering condemnation from the United States. [Ambassadors](https://twitter.com/USAmbUN/status/1552663142815121410) and [envoys](https://twitter.com/StateSEAS/status/1552600882210037763) criticized the “[antisemitic, anti-Israel comments](https://twitter.com/USAmbHRC/status/1552563133335601154)” and expressed indignation that a UN official questioned Israel’s legitimacy as a UN member. Other [countries](https://unwatch.org/un-investigator-condemned-for-antisemitism-by-uk-france-canada-us/) and [organizations](https://twitter.com/ADL/status/1552309630063222784) chimed in, too.

These condemnations are appropriate and welcome. But without decisive action, when the Human Rights Council convenes in September, the “Jewish lobby” commission will take Israel-bashing to a new level.

Kothari also made clear the commission is working to label Israel an apartheid state — widely expected based on its mandate to probe “systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial or religious identity.”

The apartheid accusation against Israel, besides being absurd, manifests an anti-Semitic goal of denying Jews the right to self-determination by claiming that Israel’s existence is a racist endeavor. In fact, that’s a textbook example of anti-Semitism put forward by the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance](https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism), an intergovernmental group of dozens of countries committed to fighting the scourge of Jew-hatred.

In June, during the Human Rights Council’s 50th session, 21 countries joined the United States in condemning the commission’s bias against Israel. But America and its allies did not press for terminating the commission’s mandate. As events of the last days make clear, their warning shot went unheeded.

When the council reconvenes in September, the commission may try to expand its probe into Israel’s latest counterterrorism operations. Nations that stand opposed to anti-Semitism should instead join the Biden team in voting to dissolve it. This should be a high diplomatic priority for both the National Security Council and State Department — deploying National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Secretary of State Antony Blinken as needed to lock down the votes.

It’s also major test for the Biden administration’s belief that it could reform the Human Rights Council by rejoining it. If America proves unable to terminate the “Jewish lobby” commission’s mandate, both the administration and Congress must re-evaluate the utility of US participation in a Jew-hating circus.