

66th SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Check Against Delivery

Statement by

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Fourth Committee

“Report on the Special Committee
to Investigate Israeli Practices
Affecting the Human Rights of the
Palestinian People and Other Arabs
of the Occupied Territory”

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Madame Chair,

It would be charitable to describe the reports before this Committee as “blind”. Year after year, the glaring omissions, findings presented out of context, and blatant distortions contained in these reports make a mockery of the fact-finding process and undermine the credibility of this committee.

The major issues with these reports begin with their one-sided mandate, which makes it impossible to accurately or impartially reflect on the situation on the ground. They offer harsh and wide-ranging criticism of Israel. Yet, Hamas’ brutal repression of Palestinians in Gaza is ignored. The thousands of Israelis who have been killed, injured and widowed by acts of Palestinian terror remain unmentioned. The continued incitement in Palestinian schools, mosques and media is not discussed.

The Reporting Committee wrote pages and pages bashing Israel following its visit to Gaza last July. While the Committee was on the ground, terrorists in Gaza fired 19 rockets and mortars at Israeli civilians. These attacks were conveniently omitted. So were the more than 9,000 rockets that have been launched into Southern Israel over the past ten years.

How could anyone characterize such a collection of reports as impartial, objective or accurate investigations into the situation in our region when such basic facts are deliberately ignored, overlooked and omitted?

Madame President,

Like any other country, Israel has the right to defend its citizens. This week, we witnessed yet another horrific series of attacks that paralyzed daily life in Southern Israel, including in major cities such as Ashdod and Beersheba. More than 40 Grad rockets, long-range missiles and mortars were launched into Israel. One Israeli man sitting in his house in Ashkelon was killed when a rocket exploded on top of him. Many others were injured. One million Israelis were kept home from work this week to ensure their safety. 100,000 children were kept home from school.

The acts of terror committed against the Israeli people this year should shock and appall this committee and all decent people. In April, Hamas launched an anti-Tank missile from Gaza at a yellow school bus, killing a 16 year old boy on his way back from school. In August, Hamas and other terrorist organizations crossed into the Sinai from Gaza and gunned down Israeli motorists in cold blood, using anti-Tank missiles to blow up civilian buses and killing nine Israelis.

In the West Bank, terror attacks also continue. Last March, we witnessed the gruesome murder of a family in Itamar. Two parents and three of their children – an 11 year-old, a 4 year-old, and a 3 month-old infant were slaughtered in their sleep.

No people should have to live under such a specter of terror. No government should be expected to sit idly by as its citizens are brutally murdered by terrorists. We will continue to exercise our right to self-defense, as appropriate, taking all necessary measures to protect our citizens.

Madame Chair,

When Hamas is not attacking Israeli civilians, it is oppressing and endangering its own people and international organizations in Gaza. It cynically places its military installations and stores its weapons inside homes, mosques and schools, and in close proximity to UN facilities. In Gaza, civil society is nonexistent, political opponents are tortured, women are subjugated, and children are used as suicide bombers. Textbooks and television glorify martyrdom and demonize Jews. Incitement against Israelis also continues in the West Bank and in the official institutions of the Palestinian Authority, which names its public squares after suicide bombers.

Madame Chair,

These reports also ignore many positive developments in the West Bank and in Gaza over the past year, which have been acknowledged by the Quartet, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other relevant bodies that seek to promote peace. According to Palestinian statistics, Gaza's real GDP growth amounted to 28% in the first half of 2011. GDP per capita rose accordingly by more than 20%. The unemployment rate has declined dramatically as a result.

Israel has also taken measures to substantially improve the West Bank economy, including the removal of hundreds of roadblocks and checkpoints. Other measures have been taken to improve access and movement. This has yielded remarkable results. The West Bank's GDP grew by 8% in 2010 and 4% during the first half of 2011.

This Committee continues to advance a one-sided narrative, suggesting that settlements are the core cause of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. It's an interesting assertion considering that our conflict was raging for nearly a half century before a single settlement sprung up in the West Bank.

The issue of settlements will be worked out over the course of negotiations, but the primary obstacle to peace is not settlements. The primary obstacle to peace is the Arab World's refusal to acknowledge the Jewish People's ancient connection to the Land of Israel — and the Palestinian's insistence on the so-called right of return.

Today the Palestinian leadership is calling for an independent Palestinian state, but insists that its people return to the Jewish state. It's a proposition that no one who believes in the right of Israel to exist could accept because the so-called right of return would mean the destruction of the State of Israel.

Madam Chair,

Israel stands out in our region for its unique commitment to advancing human rights. We have a vibrant democracy, a free press and very active civil society. Our independent, professional and highly respected judiciary system is open and accessible. Of the 300 million Arabs in the Middle East and North Africa, only those who live in Israel and the West Bank have full access to free and open courts. Despite constant threats from terrorists, my country upholds and pursues human rights as a sacrosanct ideal. These are the core values on which our state is built.

Some of the countries on the Committee carry human rights records that are a little bit less stellar. It is absurd to read condemnation and criticism of Israel's judicial system and human rights record from countries where free expression is repressed, minorities are persecuted, and elections are a sham – countries where a single fair trial has never once taken place.

For 43 years, the UN has invested its resources in this Committee to produce biased reports against my country – the only free society in the Middle East – while the people of our region have suffered the pain and humiliation of repression, economic stagnation and tyranny. Today people are being slaughtered in the streets of Syria, women are being stoned to death in Iran, and millions are calling for their basic rights throughout the Arab World.

When will these issues be addressed?

This Committee's blatant distortion of truth does nothing to bring us closer to Middle East Peace – or to address the real challenges facing the Palestinian people. Year after year, it unfairly singles out my country, ignores the facts on the ground and undermines the credibility of the United Nations.

As such, Israel refuses, and will continue to refuse, to cooperate with this one-sided and unprofessional committee.

Thank you, Madame Chair.