



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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Israel Hits Back at Gaza War Crimes Report

U.S. Legislators Reject Biased U.N. Report on Israel

Representative Gary Ackerman (D-NY) Chairman, House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia responded to the Goldstone report by stating, "In April 2009, the UN Human Rights Council set up a Commission to condemn Israel. To the surprise of no one, it has done exactly that. But for the grave subject matter, the Goldstone report would be laughable. In the self-righteous fantasyland inhabited by the authors, there's no such thing as terrorism, there's no such thing as Hamas, there's no such thing as legitimate self-defense, and war is like a sporting event or a debate, rather than the most ghastly, destructive, chaotic phenomenon we human beings are capable of creating.

Had the report been submitted by a group of eager law students or the human rights club on a college campus, I would suggest that their efforts had been unfortunately wasted on the production of a pompous, tendentious, one-sided political diatribe. Notwithstanding all their alleged "facts" there's very little truth, and for all the so-called "context" they supply, there's very little wisdom.

As this diatribe actually carries the imprimatur of a part of the United Nations, there is the sad prospect it may be taken seriously. I certainly hope not. The consequences of such an error will be yet another round of offensive and sterile Israel-bashing that will bring peace no closer, produce no international consensus, and, along the way, further sully and cheapen the reputation of the United Nations and the cause of human rights.

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Israeli leaders united in condemnation of a "biased" UN report that severely criticized their invasion of Gaza last winter and rejected the central recommendation that Israel should hold an independent investigation into the offensive. President Shimon Peres denounced the inquiry chaired by the former South African judge, Richard Goldstone, for "making a mockery of history." The spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the report was "conceived in sin and is the product of a union between propaganda and bias."

Israel's foreign ministry is expected to launch a major diplomatic operation abroad aimed at preventing the UN Security Council from taking further action on the report and to protect Israeli soldiers and commanders from any possible prosecutions abroad.

The Goldstone report recommended that if Israel did not within six months launch fully independent investigations into the "serious violations" of international law it alleges, then the country should face International Criminal Court proceedings. The report rejected Israel's explanation that it was purely acting against rocket attacks by Gaza militants and said the offensive was "a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorize a civilian population."

Israel, like the US, is not a party to the ICC, but the Goldstone team proposed the UN Security Council use its powers to authorize a prosecution. Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the ICC prosecutor, is reported to be considering the legal complexities generated by petitions from Palestinian groups arguing that the Gaza operation was mounted in territory falling within the Palestinian Authority area, and that is enough to trigger legal action against Israeli commanders.

In New York, Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister, Danny Ayalon, told leaders of the American Jewish Committee that "the Goldstone report is a dangerous attempt to harm the principle of self-defense by democratic states and provides legitimacy to terrorism." He said the report was "a cynical attempt at role reversal in blaming Israel for war crimes instead of terrorist organizations." He added that Israel would work to enlist the support of Western democracies in a campaign "to prevent turning international law into a circus."

Aides to the Defense Minister, Ehud Barak, who was in political control of the three-week offensive, said the report was a "prize for terror" and the comparison between those who foment terrorism and its victims is "unconscionable."

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U.S. Reaction to Goldstone Report (Cont'd)

Certainly, the United States should do all that it can to ensure as little time as possible is wasted on this distraction from the real work of making peace."

Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) Ranking Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee said, "[i]t would appear the UN is continuing its relentless anti-Israel bias, accusing the Jewish state of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Given that this report's mandate came from the despot-controlled Human Rights Council, we should not be surprised.

Meanwhile, the UN General Assembly kicks off another year of anti-U.S., anti-Israel, and anti-freedom activism - transferring its gavel from a defrocked Sandinista to a Qaddafi shill.

Congress must demand better by enacting pending legislation that would leverage our contributions to the UN to produce sweeping, meaningful reform of that body."

Representatives Shelley Berkley (D-NV) and Eliot Engel (D-NY) Members, House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, wrote:

"Israel has the right to defend itself against Hamas terrorists in Gaza. When Israel's population - both in the north and the south - is under attack by terrorists who fire missiles at innocent civilians day and night, they have every right to fight back and put an end to the threat. This United Nations report was biased against Israel from the very beginning and fails to see the true root of this problem - Hamas terrorists who want to destroy Israel and are willing to risk their own civilian populations - even their own children - to do so.

Israel took every reasonable step to avoid civilian casualties, dropping leaflets, avoiding strikes when civilians were present, and making hundreds of thousands of phone calls urging people to leave unsafe areas. It is ridiculous to claim that Israel did not take appropriate actions to protect civilian populations."

Note: The report was released as the United Nations General Assembly began its 64th session under the presidency of Ali Abdessalam Treki, the former foreign minister of Libya.

Israel Reacts to Goldstone Report (Cont'd)

Israel Radio said the defense establishment was trying to extend legal aid to any officers who could face indictments abroad.

Explaining Israel's decision to reject appeals for co-operation with the Goldstone inquiry, Mark Regev, Mr Netanyahu's spokesman, said: "The mandate was biased from the beginning. It would have been a mistake to give credibility to a mission that has more in common with a kangaroo court than it does with a serious investigation." He added: "Israel is a country with a fiercely independent judiciary ... Everything done by the military in Israel is open to judicial review by the independent judiciary."

The daughter of Mr. Goldstone told Israel Army Radio that the report would have been harsher had her father, who is Jewish and a onetime prosecutor of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia, not chaired the team. Nicole Goldstone said: "My father took on this job because he thought he is doing the best thing for peace, for everyone, and also for Israel." She added: "My father did not expect to see and hear what he saw and heard."

Israel Gets Two German Submarines

Israel has taken delivery of two German-made Dolphin-class submarines capable of launching missiles with nuclear warheads. Called U212s, the submarines were upgraded in Germany by Israeli technicians and engineers to enable them to carry nuclear warheads. The

submarines were ordered in 2005, and delivery was scheduled for 2010. Originally, the German government said the two vessels were not equipped to carry nuclear weapons.

With the delivery, Israel now has five state-of-the-art U212s. Designed for a crew of 35 they are capable of launching cruise missiles that carry nuclear warheads to a distance of 2,810 miles. The submarines are the most expensive weapons in Israel's arsenal.

Since the end of the Second World War and the mass murder of Jews under the Nazi regime, Germany has made it its historic obligation to help Israel. The first two U212s were donated by Berlin to the government of Israel after the 1991 Gulf War. It split the cost of the third with Israel, offering it at an almost symbolic price.

An Israeli submarine recently used the Suez Canal for the first time, anchoring in the Red Sea in a journey that would have normally required the Israeli vessel to travel around the coast of Africa. Escorted in June by Egyptian navy vessels, the move was intended to send a message to Iran. The delivery of the submarines follows Tehran's recent missile tests.

One of the subs is permanently stationed in the Persian Gulf. The fleet of five vessels could be key in any decision by Israel to launch an attack on Iranian targets from the sea.



Speaking of Israel @ the High Holidays

“Don’t be in a rush to condemn Israel. Don’t criticize Israel like the rest of the world does when Israel does what it thinks best in trying to defend itself. No nation on this earth should fail to respond when it is being attacked. There could be peace tomorrow if Israel had a sincere partner on the other side of the table.”

Rabbi Benjamin Scolnic
Rosh Hashanah Sermon

“My appeal to you is that in the coming year you will raise your voices in support of Israel. At work, at school, at dinner parties and social occasions, with family and with friends, and with those who are not so friendly. In letters to the editor and on call-in programs. In the lecture hall and classroom as teachers or as students. On the issues of fairness and of Israel’s basic right to exist as a member of the family of nations we must speak with one voice, as American Jews.”

Dr. Martin Laskin
Annual Israel Appeal

Bar Kochba Treasure Discovered in Judean Hills

Israeli archaeologists unveiled never before seen historical artifacts from a recent discovery of a Judean Hills cave used by Jewish refugees during the Bar Kochba rebellion in 132-35 CE. The findings were recently presented at a press conference held at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The massive discovery marks the first time Israeli researchers have found a large hoard of ancient coins from this era. The gold, silver, and bronze coins, 120 in all, were discovered in an almost inaccessible cave in an undisclosed location along with other artifacts from the era.



The 20-meter deep cave and its bounty are continuing to be explored by Prof. Amos Frumkin (pictured left with vase) and Boaz Langford (pictured right with coin) of the Cave Research Unit in the Department of Geography of the Hebrew University and Dr. Boaz Zissu and Prof. Hanan Eshel of the Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology at Bar-Ilan University. The project is made possible with the support of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority.



The artifacts are believed to be solid evidence proving the theory that Jews found refuge in the Judean Hills during the time period. With this find, Prof. Zissu said that the distribution of the coins in the region helps to further “indicate the geographical extent of the Jewish presence outside of Jerusalem” during the Roman occupation of the land of Israel. Prof. Frumkin added “this discovery verifies the assumption that the refugees of the revolt fled to caves in the center of a populated area in addition to the caves found in more isolated areas of the Judean desert.” The researchers believe that the Judean Hills cave served as a hiding place for a dozen or more Jewish fighters.

A majority of the discovered coins were in excellent condition, which helped the researchers delve deeper into the mysteries of the era. Most of the coins were originally Roman designed and manufactured. Thereafter, Jewish fighters pressed their own insignias into the coins. Leaders of the Jewish resistance imprinted and dated coins for each year of the rebellion with, for example, images of the exterior of the Second Temple in Jerusalem and poetry for reclaiming Jerusalem as a means for spreading the rebellion via currency.

The Bar Kochba Revolt was fought against the Roman Empire and it was the last of the Jewish-Roman wars. The revolt, led by Simon Bar Kochba, was meant to put down the Roman occupation of the land of Israel. Bar Kochba managed to establish a Jewish state over parts of Judea, as Jews were banned from living in Jerusalem or visiting the site of the destroyed Second Temple. Many scholars view the Bar Kochba Revolt as the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora.

Benjamin Netanyahu's Address To The U.N. General Assembly

September 24, 2009

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nearly 62 years ago, the United Nations recognized the right of the Jews, an ancient people 3,500 years-old, to a state of their own in their ancestral homeland.

I stand here today as the Prime Minister of Israel, the Jewish state, and I speak to you on behalf of my country and my people.

The United Nations was founded after the carnage of World War II and the horrors of the Holocaust. It was charged with preventing the recurrence of such horrendous events.

Nothing has undermined that central mission more than the systematic assault on the truth. Yesterday the President of Iran stood at this very podium, spewing his latest anti-Semitic rants. Just a few days earlier, he again claimed that the Holocaust is a lie.

Last month, I went to a villa in a suburb of Berlin called Wannsee. There, on January 20, 1942, after a hearty meal, senior Nazi officials met and decided how to exterminate the Jewish people. The detailed minutes of that meeting have been preserved by successive German governments.

Here is a copy of those minutes, in which the Nazis issued precise instructions on how to carry out the extermination of the Jews. Is this a lie?

A day before I was in Wannsee, I was given in Berlin the original construction plans for the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Those plans are signed by Hitler's deputy, Heinrich Himmler himself. Here is a copy of the plans for Auschwitz-Birkenau (see photo, left), where one million Jews were murdered. Is this too a lie?

This June, President Obama visited the Buchenwald concentration camp. Did President Obama pay tribute to a lie?

And what of the Auschwitz survivors whose arms still bear the tattooed numbers branded on them by the Nazis? Are those tattoos a lie? One-third of all Jews perished in the conflagration. Nearly every Jewish family was affected, including my own. My wife's grandparents, her father's two sisters and three brothers, and all the aunts, uncles and cousins were all murdered by the Nazis. Is that also a lie?

Yesterday, the man who calls the Holocaust a lie spoke from this podium. To those who refused to come here and to those who left this room in protest, I commend you. You stood up for moral clarity and you brought honor to your countries.

But to those who gave this Holocaust-denier a hearing, I say on behalf of my people, the Jewish people, and decent people everywhere: Have you no shame? Have you no decency?

A mere six decades after the Holocaust, you give legitimacy to a man who denies that the murder of six million Jews took place and pledges to wipe out the Jewish state.



Benjamin Netanyahu's Address To The U.N. General Assembly (Cont'd)

What a disgrace! What a mockery of the charter of the United Nations! Perhaps some of you think that this man and his odious regime threaten only the Jews. You're wrong.

History has shown us time and again that what starts with attacks on the Jews eventually ends up engulfing many others.

This Iranian regime is fueled by an extreme fundamentalism that burst onto the world scene three decades ago after lying dormant for centuries. In the past thirty years, this fanaticism has swept the globe with a murderous violence and cold-blooded impartiality in its choice of victims. It has callously slaughtered Moslems and Christians, Jews and Hindus, and many others. Though it is comprised of different offshoots, the adherents of this unforgiving creed seek to return humanity to medieval times.

Wherever they can, they impose a backward regimented society where women, minorities, gays or anyone not deemed to be a true believer is brutally subjugated. The struggle against this fanaticism does not pit faith against faith nor civilization against civilization.

It pits civilization against barbarism, the 21st century against the 9th century, those who sanctify life against those who glorify death.

The primitivism of the 9th century ought to be no match for the progress of the 21st century. The allure of freedom, the power of technology, the reach of communications should surely win the day. Ultimately, the past cannot triumph over the future. And the future offers all nations magnificent bounties of hope. The pace of progress is growing exponentially.

It took us centuries to get from the printing press to the telephone, decades to get from the telephone to the personal computer, and only a few years to get from the personal computer to the internet.

What seemed impossible a few years ago is already outdated, and we can scarcely fathom the changes that are yet to come. We will crack the genetic code. We will cure the incurable. We will lengthen our lives. We will find a cheap alternative to fossil fuels and clean up the planet.

I am proud that my country Israel is at the forefront of these advances - by leading innovations in science and technology, medicine and biology, agriculture and water, energy and the environment. These innovations the world over offer humanity a sunlit future of unimagined promise.

But if the most primitive fanaticism can acquire the most deadly weapons, the march of history could be reversed for a time. And like the belated victory over the Nazis, the forces of progress and freedom will prevail only after an horrific toll of blood and fortune has been exacted from mankind. That is why the greatest threat facing the world today is the marriage between religious fanaticism and the weapons of mass destruction.

The most urgent challenge facing this body is to prevent the tyrants of Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Are the member states of the United Nations up to that challenge? Will the international community confront a despotism that terrorizes its own people as they bravely stand up for freedom?

Will it take action against the dictators who stole an election in broad daylight and gunned down Iranian protesters who died in the streets choking in their own blood? Will the international community thwart the world's most pernicious sponsors and practitioners of terrorism?

Benjamin Netanyahu's Address To The U.N. General Assembly (Cont'd)

Above all, will the international community stop the terrorist regime of Iran from developing atomic weapons, thereby endangering the peace of the entire world?

The people of Iran are courageously standing up to this regime. People of goodwill around the world stand with them, as do the thousands who have been protesting outside this hall. Will the United Nations stand by their side?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The jury is still out on the United Nations, and recent signs are not encouraging. Rather than condemning the terrorists and their Iranian patrons, some here have condemned their victims. That is exactly what a recent UN report on Gaza did, falsely equating the terrorists with those they targeted.

For eight long years, Hamas fired from Gaza thousands of missiles, mortars and rockets on nearby Israeli cities.. Year after year, as these missiles were deliberately hurled at our civilians, not a single UN resolution was passed condemning those criminal attacks. We heard nothing - absolutely nothing - from the UN Human Rights Council, a misnamed institution if there ever was one.

In 2005, hoping to advance peace, Israel unilaterally withdrew from every inch of Gaza. It dismantled 21 settlements and uprooted over 8,000 Israelis. We didn't get peace. Instead we got an Iranian backed terror base fifty miles from Tel Aviv. Life in Israeli towns and cities next to Gaza became a nightmare. You see, the Hamas rocket attacks not only continued, they increased ten-fold. Again, the UN was silent.

Finally, after eight years of this unremitting assault, Israel was finally forced to respond. But how should we have responded? Well, there is only one example in history of thousands of rockets being fired on a country's civilian population. It happened when the Nazis rocketed British cities during World War II. During that war, the allies leveled German cities, causing hundreds of thousands of casualties. Israel chose to respond differently. Faced with an enemy committing a double war crime of firing on civilians while hiding behind civilians - Israel sought to conduct surgical strikes against the rocket launchers.

That was no easy task because the terrorists were firing missiles from homes and schools, using mosques as weapons depots and ferreting explosives in ambulances. Israel, by contrast, tried to minimize casualties by urging Palestinian civilians to vacate the targeted areas.

We dropped countless flyers over their homes, sent thousands of text messages and called thousands of cell phones asking people to leave. Never has a country gone to such extraordinary lengths to remove the enemy's civilian population from harm's way.

Yet faced with such a clear case of aggressor and victim, who did the UN Human Rights Council decide to condemn? Israel. A democracy legitimately defending itself against terror is morally hanged, drawn and quartered, and given an unfair trial to boot.

By these twisted standards, the UN Human Rights Council would have dragged Roosevelt and Churchill to the dock as war criminals. What a perversion of truth. What a perversion of justice.

Delegates of the United Nations,

Will you accept this farce?

Benjamin Netanyahu's Address To The U.N. General Assembly (Cont'd)

Because if you do, the United Nations would revert to its darkest days, when the worst violators of human rights sat in judgment against the law-abiding democracies, when Zionism was equated with racism and when an automatic majority could declare that the earth is flat.

If this body does not reject this report, it would send a message to terrorists everywhere: Terror pays; if you launch your attacks from densely populated areas, you will win immunity. And in condemning Israel, this body would also deal a mortal blow to peace. Here's why.

When Israel left Gaza, many hoped that the missile attacks would stop. Others believed that at the very least, Israel would have international legitimacy to exercise its right of self-defense. What legitimacy? What self-defense?

The same UN that cheered Israel as it left Gaza and promised to back our right of self-defense now accuses us -my people, my country - of war crimes? And for what? For acting responsibly in self-defense. What a travesty!

Israel justly defended itself against terror. This biased and unjust report is a clear-cut test for all governments. Will you stand with Israel or will you stand with the terrorists?

We must know the answer to that question now. Now and not later. Because if Israel is again asked to take more risks for peace, we must know today that you will stand with us tomorrow. Only if we have the confidence that we can defend ourselves can we take further risks for peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All of Israel wants peace.

Any time an Arab leader genuinely wanted peace with us, we made peace. We made peace with Egypt led by Anwar Sadat. We made peace with Jordan led by King Hussein. And if the Palestinians truly want peace, I and my government, and the people of Israel, will make peace. But we want a genuine peace, a defensible peace, a permanent peace. In 1947, this body voted to establish two states for two peoples - a Jewish state and an Arab state. The Jews accepted that resolution. The Arabs rejected it.

We ask the Palestinians to finally do what they have refused to do for 62 years: Say yes to a Jewish state. Just as we are asked to recognize a nation-state for the Palestinian people, the Palestinians must be asked to recognize the nation state of the Jewish people. The Jewish people are not foreign conquerors in the Land of Israel. This is the land of our forefathers.

Inscribed on the walls outside this building is the great Biblical vision of peace: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. They shall learn war no more." These words were spoken by the Jewish prophet Isaiah 2,800 years ago as he walked in my country, in my city, in the hills of Judea and in the streets of Jerusalem.

We are not strangers to this land. It is our homeland. As deeply connected as we are to this land, we recognize that the Palestinians also live there and want a home of their own. We want to live side by side with them, two free peoples living in peace, prosperity and dignity.

But we must have security. The Palestinians should have all the powers to govern themselves except those handful of powers that could endanger Israel.

Benjamin Netanyahu's Address To The U.N. General Assembly (Cont'd)

That is why a Palestinian state must be effectively demilitarized. We don't want another Gaza, another Iranian backed terror base abutting Jerusalem and perched on the hills a few kilometers from Tel Aviv.

We want peace.

I believe such a peace can be achieved. But only if we roll back the forces of terror, led by Iran, that seek to destroy peace, eliminate Israel and overthrow the world order. The question facing the international community is whether it is prepared to confront those forces or accommodate them.

Over seventy years ago, Winston Churchill lamented what he called the "confirmed unteachability of mankind," the unfortunate habit of civilized societies to sleep until danger nearly overtakes them..

Churchill bemoaned what he called the "want of foresight, the unwillingness to act when action will be simple and effective, the lack of clear thinking, the confusion of counsel until emergency comes, until self-preservation strikes its jarring gong."

I speak here today in the hope that Churchill's assessment of the "unteachability of mankind" is for once proven wrong.

I speak here today in the hope that we can learn from history -- that we can prevent danger in time.

In the spirit of the timeless words spoken to Joshua over 3,000 years ago, let us be strong and of good courage. Let us confront this peril, secure our future and, God willing, forge an enduring peace for generations to come.