

ISRAEL

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Statement by:

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Agenda Item 67: Promotion and
protection of human rights questions

Report of Special Rapporteur on the situation of human
rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967

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Mr. Chairman,

As Israel is the primary subject of this report, I thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee and broaden the parochial perspective we just heard.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel has emphasized – time and again – the problematic nature of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. Israel has repeatedly expressed its reservations on the reliability and utility of such reporting. The content of this year’s report, once again, proves this very concern.

Rather than improve human rights, as it should, the Special Rapporteur’s mandate serves only to politicize the issue by examining just one side of the conflict. This report not only prejudices the outcome of any investigation, it also undermines the prospects for honest dialogue. Institutionally, one-sided mandates vastly jeopardize the wave of reforms this organization is trying to implement with regard to administration and governance. Moreover, it should be of great concern for those trusted with ensuring the efficiency, legitimacy, and credibility of the newly established Human Rights Council.

Mr. Chairman,

This report, like its predecessors, contains errors of omissions, distortions of fact and law, and agendas advancing a one-sided political goal. The report’s depiction of the complex situation in the territories is particularly regrettable, and oversimplifies matters while ignoring essential context. A case in point is the reference the Special Rapporteur makes to the border closures and specifically the difficulty for goods and people to move through crossing points to and from the Gaza Strip. The report completely ignores the horrifying reality of these crossing points, which have become primary targets of Palestinian terror. Palestinian terror attacks force closures, which in turn force a humanitarian situation on the Palestinian people. The Special Rapporteur’s dismissal of this chain of events, at a time when Israelis are under daily attack by Qassam rockets and Palestinian terror, is appalling.

Mr. Chairman,

More than one year ago, Israel left the Gaza Strip, embarking on a bold but painful disengagement. This unprecedented move was meant to create a new opportunity for progress and peace. But rather than plant seeds of peace, the Palestinians chose to sow terror. Since that time Israel has been the beneficiary of unbridled Palestinian terror, particularly in the form of indiscriminate Qassam rocket attacks which threaten homes, schools, and playgrounds. Israel had no intention of disengaging from Gaza only to return there. But the terrorists have forced our hand: Israel, like any other country, retains the fundamental right and duty to defend and protect its citizens – and it will.

Mr. Chairman,

The Special Rapporteur's report suggests that Israel and the international community speak to Hamas. Yet Hamas is an organization whose representative as the elected Prime Minister of the Palestinian people, Ismail Haniyeh, said earlier this month: (quote) "The language of blood is my language, and there is nothing but blood. I have shut my mouth to the art of speech, and let the machine gun do the talking...." (end quote). Who exactly does the Special Rapporteur want Israel and international community to speak with?

As long as the Hamas government fails to recognize Israel, accept and implement agreements signed between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and terminate violence and eradicate terrorism – including but not limited to the attacks on our southern communities – Israel cannot dialogue with it.

Mr. Chairman,

For over a decade Israel has pointed to the limited scope of the Special Rapporteur's mandate. And as it did last year, this year's report only departs from its usually myopic lens to criticize the Quartet and Road Map.

The international community has made it clear that the best, if not the only, hope of arriving at a resolution to the conflict is through the process set out in the Road Map. This plan, proposed by the Quartet, which the United Nations is a part of, has been accepted by the Israeli and Palestinian leadership, and adopted by the Security Council.

Moreover, Mr. Chairman, an honest and committed approach to Palestinian human rights would have included references to human rights violations by Palestinians – including executions, honour killings, the abuse of women, and the recruiting of children for armed conflict. In past reports – though his mandate does not extend to these concerns – the Special Rapporteur mentioned, at least in passing, executions and honour killings. This year's report, however, in spite of the continuation of such human rights abuses documented by human rights groups, did not.

The Special Rapporteur's report can be ultimately questioned in its protracted editorial glosses. These side comments do not advance human rights nor do they reflect accurate reporting. Readers of this report cannot separate fact from the author's personal prejudice.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel does not believe Israeli-Palestinian relations are a zero sum game. Not every Israeli interest is at odds with Palestinian ones. But progress begins with dialogue, and dialogue begins with a reliable and honest partnership. That partnership can start with the release of Gilad Shalit and an end to all forms of violence. Sadly, however, this report does not envision such new beginnings.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.