**Head of UN body resigns as her group’s ‘apartheid Israel’ report is withdrawn**

March 17, 2017

By: Times of Israel Staff

Times of Israel

http://www.timesofisrael.com/head-of-un-body-resigns-as-anti-israel-report-is-withdrawn/

The head of a Lebanon-based United Nations agency that promotes development in Arab countries resigned Friday, after the body she led was ordered by the UN secretary-general to remove from its website a controversial report that charged Israel [has established an “apartheid regime](http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-fumes-as-un-board-censures-apartheid-and-racial-domination/)” guilty of “racial domination” over the Palestinians.

Rima Khalaf, a Jordanian who served as executive secretary of the Beirut-based Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), announced her resignation at a hastily arranged press conference in the Lebanese capital.

She said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres’s insistence [that the document be removed from the agency’s website](http://www.timesofisrael.com/un-chief-requests-report-accusing-israel-of-apartheid-be-pulled-from-web/) led her to quit.

“The secretary general asked me yesterday morning to withdraw (the report). I asked him to rethink his decision, he insisted, so I submitted my resignation from the UN,” Khalaf said.

“We expected of course that Israel and its allies would put huge pressure on the secretary general of the UN so that he would disavow the report, and that they would ask him to withdraw it,” Khalaf, who had also served as an under-secretary-general to Guterres, added.

The report was no longer available on ESCWA’s website as of Friday afternoon.

Guterres accepted Khalaf’s resignation. Spokesman Stephane Dujarric explained to media in New York that “The secretary-general cannot accept that an under-secretary-general or any other senior UN official that reports to him would authorize the publication under the UN name, under the UN logo, without consulting the competent departments and even himself,” according to Reuters.

The document, published earlier this week by ESCWA, which comprises 18 Arab countries, drew swift and vociferous criticism from US and Israeli officials. “The United States is outraged by the report,” US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley said in a statement. She went on to demand the report be withdrawn.

Its authors concluded that “Israel has established an apartheid regime that systematically institutionalizes racial oppression and domination of the Palestinian people as a whole.”

Khalaf has long been criticized by Israeli officials for her perceived anti-Israel positions.

UN chief Guterres distanced himself from the report on Wednesday, and then requested its removal from ESCWA’s website.

Israel’s Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon welcomed the developments, saying Guterres’s move was “an important step in stopping discrimination against Israel.”

In a statement, Danon said “Anti-Israel activists do not belong in the UN. It is time to put an end to practice in which UN officials use their position to advance their anti-Israel agenda.”

He added that “Over the years Khalaf has worked to harm Israel and advocate for the BDS movement. Her removal from the UN is long overdue.”

US envoy to the UN Nikki Haley, who had [demanded the report’s withdrawal](http://www.timesofisrael.com/us-demands-un-pull-report-accusing-israel-of-apartheid/) Wednesday, said in a statement: “When someone issues a false and defamatory report in the name of the US, it is appropriate that the person resign. UN agencies must do a better job of eliminating false and biased work, and I applaud the secretary-general’s decision to distance his good office from it.”

Danon said of the report on Wednesday that the “attempt to smear and falsely label the only true democracy in the Middle East by creating a false analogy is despicable and constitutes a blatant lie.”

“It comes as no surprise that an organization headed by an individual who has called for boycotts against Israel, and compared our democracy to the most terrible regimes of the twentieth century, would publish such a report,” he added in reference to Khalaf. “We call on the Secretary-General to disassociate the UN from this biased and deceitful report.”

The report, which was published Wednesday, was [titled “Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid,”](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/uploads/israeli-practices-palestinian-people-apartheid-occupation-executive-summary-english.pdf) and says that “available evidence establishes beyond a reasonable doubt that Israel is guilty of policies and practices that constitute the crime of apartheid as legally defined in instruments of international law.”

The report further accuses Israel of “practices” that have fragmented Palestinians, arguing that it is the “principal method by which Israel imposes an apartheid regime.”

The report was compiled by Richard Falk, a Princeton professor emeritus with a long track record of vehemently anti-Israel rhetoric who previously was the UN’s Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Palestine, and by Virginia Tilley, an American political scientist who authored the book “The One-State Solution” in 2005.

Haley described Falk as “a man who has repeatedly made biased and deeply offensive comments about Israel and espoused ridiculous conspiracy theories.”