# US Spokesperson Rebukes Veteran Arab Diplomat Over Remark to UN Security Council Comparing Gaza to ‘Concentration Camp’

June 20, 2017

By: Ben Cohen

Algemeiner

https://www.algemeiner.com/2017/06/20/us-official-rebukes-veteran-arab-diplomat-over-remark-to-un-security-council-comparing-gaza-to-concentration-camp/

A veteran Arab diplomat’s remark comparing the Gaza Strip with a “concentration camp” at a Security Council briefing drew a sharp rebuke from the US mission to the United Nations on Tuesday.

“Indecent and irresponsible remarks such as these are another example of the anti-Israel bias at the UN that has to end,” a spokesperson for the US mission to the UN told The Algemeiner following the speech at a Security Council meeting on “the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” given by Lakhdar Brahimi, a former Algerian foreign minister and UN envoy to Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

During his address, Brahimi — who spoke as a member “The Elders,” a body of global influencers gathered under the auspices of former US President Jimmy Carter — sympathetically quoted a Palestinian woman in Gaza who told him, “Israel has put us in a concentration camp.”

Gaza has been under a joint Israeli-Egyptian blockade since the violent seizure of power by the Islamist terror organization Hamas in 2007. The Egyptians eased some crossing restrictions with Gaza in December 2016, while Israel enables the constant resupply of civilian and humanitarian goods into the coastal enclave. The UN’s own figures show that between 8,000-12,000 truckloads of goods cross from Israel into Gaza each month, including construction materials, medical supplies, IT hardware, foodstuffs and hygiene products.

Israel’s Ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, slammed Brahimi for having made “no mention of Israel’s legitimate right to defend its citizens.” Israel has faced three wars launched by Hamas from Gaza in the previous decade.

“The Security Council has provided a platform to antisemitic comments and a malicious blood libel,” Danon declared in a statement. “This one-sided obsession with Israel is beyond the pale. To accuse the Jewish state of using concentration camps is not only despicable, but it degrades the Security Council and the UN as a whole. We demand that the Security Council renounce Brahimi’s statement immediately.”

Brahimi is no stranger to controversies arising from his comments about Israel or Jews more broadly. In 2009, he told the Algerian daily Liberte that “the Jewish-Zionist lobby is controlling political life in the US and can pass any decision in Congress almost unanimously.” One year later, Israel’s then-ambassador to the UN, Dan Gillerman, accused Brahimi of “prejudice, bigotry and antisemitism” after the Algerian described Israel and its policies as “the great poison in the region.”

The US spokesperson added that American diplomats at the UN had been aware that Brahimi’s presentation might spark uproar. “We insisted on having an alternative briefer, which is why Michael Doran spoke today,” the spokesperson said.

Doran — a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute in Washington DC who served as senior director in the National Security Council under President George W. Bush — told the Security Council the UN “routinely accords Palestinian-Israeli relations a special status that hardly seems justified on the basis of objective observation.” He then criticized the UN for its lack of attention to a range of other regional security challenges, such as Iran’s arming of the Hezbollah terror group in Lebanon.

Addressing the prospects for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement, Doran said, “The key lesson of the 1967 war is that peace is achieved not by United Nations intercession but by direct negotiations between the parties.”

In her speech at the briefing, US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley spotlighted the continued rule of Hamas in Gaza.

“We need to pressure Hamas to end its tyranny over the people of Gaza.” Haley stated. “We should designate Hamas as a terrorist organization in a resolution, with consequences for anyone who continues to support it.”

Haley challenged the Security Council’s members to bring Israel and the Palestinian Authority closer together as a means of defeating terrorism in the region. “This council can go and do the thing it always does, which is pick a side,” she said. “But if you saw what I saw, if you see the terrorist activity that is happening in that area right now, you would understand that […] pitting the two sides against each other is only strengthening the terrorists.”