U.N. Partially Backtracks on Decision to Censor Israeli Exhibit

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United Nations representatives have partially backed down from an attempt to censor posters on Zionism, Jerusalem, and Israeli Arabs that are part of the content of an Israeli exhibition which opened at U.N. headquarters in New York on Monday, deciding to allow the Zionism-themed poster to be shown as planned.

The Israeli U.N. delegation and the Israel education group StandWithUs conceived the exhibit and received approval to move ahead with it, but when the project was unveiled, three out of 13 parts of the exhibit—displays about Zionism, Jerusalem, and Israeli Arabs—were rejected for display on the grounds that they were “inappropriate.” Of the three initially banned posters, only the Zionism poster was reintroduced.

The Jerusalem poster shows pictures of holy sites and states that “the Jewish people are indigenous to Israel and have maintained a continuous presence in the land since 1,000 [BCE]. Jerusalem has been the center and focus of Jewish life and religion for more than three millennia and is holy to Christians and Muslims as well.”

The display on Israeli Arabs explains that they are “the largest minority in Israel, making up 20 percent of Israel’s population” and describes them as “equal citizens under the law.”

The third display defines Zionism as “the liberation movement of the Jewish people, who sought to overcome 1,900 years of oppression and regain self-determination in their indigenous homeland.”

“The U.N.’s reversal of its decision is an important victory that sends a clear message about the importance of standing strong for what you believe in,” said Shahar Azani, executive director of the Northeast U.S. for StandWithUs. “We thank [Israeli] Ambassador [to the U.N. Danny] Danon and Israel’s Mission to the U.N. for their leadership, and we at StandWithUs will continue to stand by the people and the State of Israel against lies and any attempt to censorship the truth about the vibrant and diverse democracy that is the modern State of Israel.”

Before the U.N. ultimately allowed the Zionism poster, Israel’s Danon had told U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, “By rejecting content about Zionism, the U.N. is questioning the very existence of the State of Israel as the national home of the Jewish people. The U.N. must reverse this outrageous decision and apologize to the Jewish people.”