Canada is right to boycott Durban IV and its anti-Semitic supporters

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If the word “chutzpah” had another name it would be the now infamous UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. A laughable name for a sham of a conference that was first held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, ostensibly to set policy against global hatred. Instead, it became a watershed moment that launched a new wave of radical anti-Semitism and terrorism around the globe. Even though the conference was weaponized against Israel and the Jewish people, the United Nations shockingly plans on celebrating its 20th anniversary on Sept. 22.

On Thursday, Canada took the moral high ground by announcing it will not participate. “Canada remains committed, at home and abroad, including at the UN, to advancing human rights, inclusion and combating anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and systemic racism in all its forms,” Global Affairs Canada spokesman Grantly Franklin said. “Canada opposes initiatives at the United Nations and in other multilateral forums that unfairly single out and target Israel for criticism.‎”

The decision came after both the U.S. and Australia voted against the UN General Assembly resolution that called for the one-day conference to reaffirm the 2001 fiasco that saw many nations — including Canada — walk out in protest of the obvious anti-Israel bias.

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Copies of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a notorious anti-Semitic forgery, were sold on the grounds of the 2001 conference. Leaflets saying “Hitler should have finished the job” were also reportedly circulated and Jewish participants had to endure chants like “Zionism is racism, Israel is apartheid.” The Jewish Centre in Durban was forced to close down because of threats of violence. All of these hostile and newly energized anti-Semitic activists were then defused into the world to spread their venom. And that they did.

The conference’s final declaration legitimized the global ideological attack on Israel. Only the Palestinians were listed as victims of racism and Israel was portrayed as the world’s leading purveyor of hate and intolerance. Israel was singled out and designated for boycott and endless campaigns, which are still being embraced to this day by UN bodies, including most recently the International Criminal Court.

A wave of new anti-Semitism began under cover of the 2001 Durban conference. Almost immediately after, anti-Israel agitators around the world began a defamation campaign falsely connecting the South African apartheid model to the modern state of Israel. They used both the location of the conference and its extreme anti-Israel sentiment to launch campaigns, particularly on university campuses, referring to Israel as an “apartheid state.” In fact, the University of Toronto-made “Israeli Apartheid Week” was a direct manifestation of this framework and resulted in some 20 years of hostility and victimization of Jewish students as it infected campuses all over the world.

The South African government was rightfully castigated by the world community for the crime of apartheid. By attempting to link Israel to apartheid, its opponents still aim to delegitimize, disrupt and destroy the Jewish State. A conference that was supposed to be against hate and intolerance set into motion a wave of anti-Semitism that has spiralled out of control on our campuses, in some unions and even in some political parties. Our city streets have even become avenues of hate, especially once a year when Iranian-backed anti-Israel groups put on an event called “Al-Quds Day,” which aims to “liberate Jerusalem,” violently if necessary. The Toronto group’s poster for this weekend’s event outrageously says it is “United Against Apartheid.”

The legacy of Durban is shocking in its radicalism and perseverance to profess any sort of legitimacy. At its followup conference in 2009, its organizers invited then-Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as one of its keynote speakers. This was despite the fact he and the Iranian regime called for Israel to be “wiped off the map” and their open denial of the Holocaust — through an international anti-Semitic cartoon contest. Denunciations followed but the organizers still went ahead and scheduled a followup conference in 2011 and now have the gall to allocate funding and schedule its anniversary at the United Nations.

Any state actor or NGO that on one hand condemns anti-Semitism while on the other supports Durban IV should carefully reflect upon their consistency of action and language. It’s time for other democracies like Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Poland to once again join hands. In light of the violent anti-Semitism that is engulfing many European nations like France and the U.K., isn’t it time for these heavyweights to also join Canada, the U.S., Australia and Israel in denouncing this latest chutzpah by the United Nations?

Let’s be honest, the world does indeed require a framework to advance human rights and the fight against all forms of discrimination. Hate groups that are unfairly targeting the only democratic state in the Middle East for political and racist interests are providing a disservice to our cherished global community. By adhering to the true values of the UN Declaration for Human Rights, righteous national actors and NGOs can speak for the millions of Syrians who are languishing in refugee camps because of Bashar Al-Assad’s genocide; for a strong Iranian movement that desires democracy and peace with its neighbours and an end to the murders of innocent dissenters; and for the over one million Uyghurs who are being ethnically cleansed by China. By targeting Israel, these regimes and their accomplices are focusing attention away from their own oppressive conditions.

The world is dangerously teetering on a loss of morality. If any country is suffering from apartheid, it’s Israel. The world community repeatedly targets and demeans the Jewish state because it is a Jewish state. That double standard and denial of fairness and equality amounts to the world practicing apartheid on Israel — not the other way around by any measure. It’s time to dump Durban and start afresh.