Israel Braces for Propaganda Assault by the U.N.

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By Joseph Klein

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The United Nations Human Rights Council is set to shortly release a so-called fact-finding report on the war last year in Gaza between Israel and Hamas, prepared by its “commission of inquiry.” The report is scheduled for “debate” by the Human Rights Council members on June 29th.  The only thing that is likely to be debated is which member of this hypocritical body, consisting of some of the world’s worst human rights abusers, gets to use the most strident adjectives to condemn Israel for alleged “war crimes and “crimes against humanity.”

As Yair Lapid, the chairman of Israel’s centrist Yesh Atid party said in predicting a one-sided anti-Israel report, it will further prove that the United Nations has “lost its mind.” He added that despite the massive number of tragic deaths and collapse of rule of law in countries such as Syria, Iraq Sudan, and Libya, “only Israel is obsessively investigated again and again and again, always with the assumption that the Jews are to blame for everything.”

The original chair of the commission undertaking the investigation, William Schabas, was forced to resign after it became known that he had accepted previously undisclosed consulting fees from the Palestine Liberation Organization. Mary McGowan Davis, a former justice of the New York State Supreme Court, was selected to replace him as chairperson. She had previously chaired a panel that followed up on the findings of the Goldstone Report regarding the 2008-9 Gaza war, even though critical portions of the Goldstone Report were subsequently repudiated by Richard Goldstein himself. She was a member of the American Association for the International Commission of Jurists on whose Board of Directors she still serves. In her own 2011 follow-up report to the Human Rights Council looking into Israeli and Palestinian investigations of alleged human rights abuses during the 2008-2009 conflict in Gaza, Ms. Davis essentially echoed the affiliated International Commission of Jurists’ baseless claims that Israel’s investigations into the 2008-2009 Gaza conflict were “ineffective as they lack safeguards of independence and impartiality…” Her American Association for the International Commission of Jurists is listed on the website of the UN Platform for Palestine, which, in its words, “has been developed to bolster the cooperation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.”

Even if Ms. Davis were miraculously inclined to be open-minded, the “fact-gathering” had already been completed before William Schabas resigned. Thus, in overseeing the writing of the report, she was already dealing with a stacked deck. The only other remaining member on the commission is Doudou Diene, the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on racism, who sees Islamophobia and racism pervading Western societies, including the United States. However, he sees nothing wrong at all in legitimizing anti-Zionism as acceptable political expression, denying that it simply another form of double-standard anti-Semitism directed at depriving the Jewish people of the right to self-determination.

Even if there are a few mild token criticisms of Hamas in the report, the overwhelming majority of the report is expected to be devoted to Israel-bashing. The theme will undoubtedly be that Israel over-reacted in using “disproportionate” force to respond to Hamas’s provocations, causing the deaths of nearly 1500 Palestinians whom were said to be civilians. The accusations against Israel will likely follow the pattern of other UN –generated accusations: Israel failed to take adequate precautions to avoid civilian casualties, deliberately targeted UN facilities that were being used to shelter civilians, and caused deaths and injuries to hundreds of Palestinian children resulting from “indiscriminate” air and ground attacks.

Indeed, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon’s recently released 2015 “Children and Armed Conflict” report is a preview of what to expect in the Human Rights Council report:

*The unprecedented and unacceptable scale of the impact on children in 2014 raises grave concerns about Israel’s compliance with international humanitarian law, notably the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in attack, and respect for international human rights law, particularly in relation to excessive use of force. It is of particular concern that ‘Operation Protective Edge’ was the third major Israeli military operation in Gaza within six years. The cumulative impact on children and the civilian population in general of these military operations, and the ongoing military occupation in the State of Palestine, is devastating. As this report sets out, the number of Palestinian children killed (557) is the third highest in 2014 after the number of children killed in (I) Afghanistan (710) and (II) Iraq (679), and before (IV) Syria (368) and (V) Darfur (197). The number of schools damaged or destroyed in the State of Palestine (at least 543) was the highest recorded number of all situations in 2014.*

In short, Israel will be blamed for virtually all of the fatalities and injuries in Gaza that occurred during last summer’s conflict. Ignored or barely mentioned will be Hamas’s initiation of the conflict via the relentless firing of rockets deliberately aimed at Israeli civilian population centers, Hamas’s refusal to accept successive cease-fire offers which resulted in a prolonging of the conflict, Hamas’s use of human shields and storing of rockets and other arms in residences, schools, mosques and hospitals, and Israel’s unprecedented advance warnings to civilians to evacuate before specific military operations were launched.

The “Children and Armed Conflict” report stated that between July 8 and August 26, 2014, more than ten children were killed daily in Gaza. It also said that more than 80% of the children were killed between July 17 and August 5, 2014, after Israel felt compelled to bring in ground forces to deal with the terror tunnels as well as the rocket launching bases. If so, then the blood of those children is on Hamas’s hands. Right after a mid-July ceasefire proposed by Egypt, which Israel accepted, was due to go into effect, Hamas and its co-jihadists gave their answer by firing multiple rockets from Gaza aimed at Israeli civilians. Hamas’s armed wing, the Izz el-Deen al-Qassam Brigades, declared that its attacks against Israel would “increase in ferocity and intensity.” Don’t expect the UN Human Rights Council report to include the incontrovertible fact that the bulk of the deaths of children in Gaza followed Hamas’s unilateral decision to continue the fighting even though Israel had already accepted a ceasefire as proposed by Egypt which would have stopped the fighting altogether and saved hundreds of children’s lives.

In contrast to the UN’s verdict first, evidence later approach[, a High Level International Military Group](http://blog.unwatch.org/index.php/2015/06/12/key-findings-of-the-high-level-international-military-group-on-the-gaza-conflict/), which visited Israel in May 2015 for a real fact-finding mission on the 2014 Gaza conflict, found that the Israeli military demonstrated remarkable restraint during the conflict and took extraordinary measures to protect civilian lives. It concluded that Israel did all that it could to avoid a military conflict with Hamas but had to fight after its civilian population centers came under repeated rocket attacks from Hamas and “other Gaza extremists.”

The High Level International Military Group consisted of 11 former chiefs of staff, generals, senior officers, political leaders and officials from the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Holland, Spain, Italy, Australia and Colombia, and was led by the former Chairman of the NATO Military Committee General Klaus Naumann. They found that even after the war commenced, “Israel made repeated efforts to terminate the fighting.” They minced no words in saying that Hamas’s rocket attacks, which “deliberately and indiscriminately targeted Israeli civilian population centres,” constituted “war crimes.”

Based not only on documented Israeli Defense Force (IDF) evidence, but also international media footage and senior Hamas officials’ own claims, the High Level International Military Group concluded that “Hamas launched attacks against Israel from the heart of its own civilian communities in Gaza and positioned its munitions and military forces there also, including in schools, hospitals and mosques.” While Hamas deliberately put its civilians in harm’s way and used them as human shields, the IDF “employed a series of precautionary measures to reduce civilian casualties…Measures taken to warn civilians included phone calls, SMS messages, leaflet drops, radio broadcasts, communication via Gaza-based UN staff and the detonation of harmless warning explosive charges, known as ‘knock on the roof’. Where possible the IDF sought also to give guidance on safe areas and safe routes.”

In an extraordinary statement, these experienced military officials observed that “none of us is aware of any army that takes such extensive measures as did the IDF last summer to protect the lives of the civilian population in such circumstances.”

The Palestinian propaganda machine, aided and abetted by their UN sympathizers, most notably by the grossly misnamed UN Human Rights Council and its kangaroo “investigatory” commission, will try to drown the truth with distortions, omission of critical facts and outright lies. Sadly, as Winston Churchill once said, “A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.”