**U.S. State Department's Duplicity at the U.N. Human Rights Council**

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As the American midterm election campaigns head to the finish line, the Obama administration is trying to convince Jewish voters that its treatment of Israel is not as hostile as it appears. In fact, it’s worse. The U.S. State Department has now adopted a practice honed by Israel’s Arab negotiating partners – saying different things to different audiences. The State Department is distributing for American consumption speeches that it claims were delivered in Israel’s defense at the recent session of the U.N. Human Rights Council. But the remarks American diplomats actually delivered to the U.N. audience, which President Obama so desperately seeks to impress, were strikingly different.

The foreign policy deception involves the U.N. Human Rights Council, which the president decided to join soon after taking office. At the beginning of October the Human Rights Council concluded its fifteenth session, marking the end of a full year of American membership on the U.N.’s lead human rights body. U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, Eileen Donahoe marked the occasion by declaring that the Human Rights Council had “made historic progress…in advancing the rights of human rights defenders throughout the world.” But her claim turns on the virtue of legitimizing the demonization of Israel in favor of other people’s human rights.

At this latest session, the Human Rights Council had before it two extraordinarily ugly reports condemning Israel. One was aimed at keeping alive last year’s Goldstone Report, a modern-day blood libel alleging that the 2009 Gaza war was not fought in self-defense but was a deliberate move by Israel to murder Palestinian civilians. The new report, produced for this session, repeats the odious claim that Israel engaged in “violence against civilians as part of a deliberate policy” and goes on to criticize Israel’s legal system for failing to mount a witch hunt for “officials at the highest levels.” Referring to the Hamas internal “investigation,” which repeatedly exonerated itself from all wrongdoing, the U.N.’s team could only conclude that it “is not in a position to ascertain the veracity of any of these assertions.” It was produced by a committee chaired by German lawyer Christian Tomuschat, who once provided legal advice to Yasser Arafat’s PLO.

When it came time for the Human Rights Council to take up the report the Obama administration sought to manufacture a middle ground. Knowing that the committee’s mandate was to implement the infamous conclusions of the Goldstone Report, Ambassador Donahoe told the Human Rights Council on September 27: “We appreciate that the Tomuschat Committee did not jump to conclusions…” She also praised the committee on the grounds that it “did not recommend any further UN action,” despite the fact that the report was written so that it would guarantee the committee’s reappointment. Indeed, the Tomuschat committee was reappointed together “with all administrative, technical and logistic assistance” they could dream of, shortly thereafter.

Then Ambassador Donahoe varied her speech from the version now gracing the State Department website. She dropped these words: “Because Israel has the right and the demonstrated ability to conduct credible investigations and serious self-scrutiny, further follow-up of the Goldstone Report by UN bodies is unnecessary and unwarranted.”

This was not a one-off occurrence. The second Israel-bashing report before the Human Rights Council had been commissioned last June following the flotilla incident, in which 9 Turkish-backed extremists died after they tried to ram an Israeli blockade of Hamas-run Gaza. The Human Rights Council “investigation,” created within 48 hours of the incident, was carried out by a carefully selected three-person group that included one Desmond de Silva. De Silva had jointly headed a British law office with a Palestinian legal advisor, and their law practice had hosted the legal team supporting a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state. De Silva was unabashed about his predilection to grease legal wheels for terrorists. He told the Human Rights Council on September 28: “[E]ven if Bin Laden himself was on board the Mavi Marmara” – the vessel on which the deaths occurred – “it wouldn’t have made the blockade legal.”

The flotilla investigative group that included de Silva said it couldn’t trust Israeli video evidence of the incident, and called the thugs who nearly murdered Israeli soldiers “persons genuinely committed to the spirit of humanitarianism.” These “experts” couldn’t think of a single “military advantage” for the Israeli blockade – a key test in determining whether Israel’s action was legal – though the blockade obviously prevents the creation of an Iranian weapons depot on the Mediterranean a few miles from Israeli population centers. Instead, they produced the usual U.N. laundry list of wild accusations and demands, such as prosecuting Israelis for torture. Hamas immediately "hailed the contents of the report…on the massacre perpetrated by the Zionist forces against international activists on board the fleet of freedom.”

When this despicable report came to the Human Rights Council for discussion, the State Department website claims Ambassador Donahoe delivered a speech, saying: “We have received the lengthy report of the fact-finding mission. We are concerned by the report’s unbalanced language, tone and conclusions.” But on September 28 what she actually said to the Council was this: “On an initial reading, we are concerned by the report’s unbalanced language, tone and conclusions.”

And again on September 27, the State Department gave the U.N. a Donahoe speech to post on the U.N. website which includes an important defense of Israel – all of which was omitted from her actual delivery:

In contrast to the unbalanced mechanisms adopted under this agenda item, Israel has been conducting its own process of credible investigations, and Israeli officials have been actively engaged in scrutinizing doctrinal issues. Israel has also established an independent public commission to examine the Israeli mechanism for investigating complaints and claims raised in relation to violations of the laws of armed conflict. This commission is headed by respected Israeli jurist Yaakov Turkel and includes two international observers: Nobel Peace Prize laureate Lord David Trimble and former Canadian Judge Advocate General Kenneth Watkin. This commission, along with the ongoing inquiries and changes in combat doctrine demonstrate Israel's ability to conduct credible investigations and serious self-scrutiny, and we urge this Council to consider these factors as it deliberates.

A few days later, on September 29, the Human Rights Council voted to approve the Goldstone-Tomuschat and flotilla reports. Widespread repugnance in America and Israel over the Goldstone report made it impossible for the administration to support a report following it up. But on the flotilla episode, the administration rejected the Human Rights Council’s flotilla investigation only to bind Israel to an investigation created by the U.N. secretary general. The president pressured Israel to accept – for the first time in Israel’s history – oversight of the Israel Defense Forces by the U.N. The Turkel commission, Nobel laureates and all, were disposable. Of course, if President Obama were ever to agree to put the American armed forces under a similar knife, his presidency would be doomed.

As a result, some acrobatics were required at the Human Rights Council when the Obama administration had to explain its position for and against U.N. investigations of Israel. So on the Goldstone-Tomuschat resolution, Donahoe said: “…we did not support international oversight of domestic legal processes absent an indication that they are manifestly failing to deal seriously with alleged abuses…Extension of the committee of experts at this point is unnecessary and unhelpful.” And on the flotilla resolution Donahoe said: “the Secretary-General’s…panel is the primary method for the international community to review the incident.” Following these contradictory explanations, which inspired no support from the other Human Rights Council members, the U.S. voted against in both cases. The resolutions passed handily.

At the conclusion of this session, the Human Rights Council’s demonization of Israel stood at an all-time high. With the Goldstone-Tomuschat and flotilla resolutions, the Human Rights Council maintained its record of having adopted more resolutions and decisions condemning Israel than all other 191 U.N. states combined. The Human Rights Council had spent as much time attacking Israel than it did on its one agenda item for “human-rights situations that require the Council’s attention” anywhere else in the world.

But for the Obama administration this was an “historic” session advancing human rights. On October 1, Ambassador Donahoe pointed to the creation of a new investigator on the theme of freedom of association and assembly and a new working group to monitor “discrimination against women in law and practice.” The firm Obama storyline on the Council was articulated by Ambassador Donahoe in an op-ed in the New York Times on September 13: “I have been very pleased by several developments that confirm U.S. participation was the correct decision.”

So. as President Obama would say, let us be clear. This administration’s message is that demonizing Israelis is a price worth paying for the sake of other people’s human rights. “Several developments” for anybody else trump several losses for the Jewish state. Legitimizing the Human Rights Council with American membership and financial support is justified regardless of the threat that it poses to the safety and security of the Jewish people. The Obama administration ought to know better. Equality and human dignity cannot be built on the inequality of the few.

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