Germany's anti-Israel UN votes in 2019 - a wakeup call

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The Simon Wiesenthal Center (SWC) in Los Angeles publishes an annual list of the ten worst global antisemitic and anti-Israel incidents. In 2019, Christoph Heusgen, Germany’s UN Ambassador, is in seventh place. Germany is currently a member of the UN Security Council.

In its explanatory text, the SWC quoted an editorial from Germany’s largest daily Bild. Heusgen cast 16 anti-Israel votes at the UN in 2018, abstaining once. In 2019, he voted for nine anti-Israel resolutions, including one labelling Jerusalem’s holiest sites as “Palestinian Occupied Territory.” He abstained three times and opposed only one anti-Israel resolution.

In explaining one of his anti-Israel votes, Heusgen made a statement at the UN, which was both nonsensical and vile: “We believe that international law is the best way to protect civilians and allow them to live in peace and security and without fear of Israeli bulldozers or Hamas rockets."

In March 2019, Bild wrote a response to Heusgen’s statement comparing Palestinian rockets with Israeli bulldozers.  It said: "This equivalence is pure malice. That in a week in which the Israeli population frequently had to flee for rocket shooting by Hamas terrorists. Referral to the bulldozers, however, is a measure which the Israeli government takes against illegal building which concerns mainly Palestinians, but also Israeli settlements.”

After Heusgen’s name appeared on the SWC list, the German Government tried to whitewash him. A spokesperson said that it was absurd to connect Heusgen to antisemitism. She pointed out that when Heusgen votes on resolutions about Israel, he does so upon instructions from his government. Furthermore, she claimed that Heusgen is a diplomat who "over the years and with great passion has taken a position against antisemitism."

The spokesperson added: "Ambassador Heusgen is a leading diplomat who is committed to security and historical links with Israel, exactly like the German Republic."

The last sentence didn't clarify much for those observers who have doubts about Germany's commitment to Israel. And even if Heusgen was voting according to government instructions, the comparison between Hamas and Israel's actions was his own.

The SWC received support from Uwe Becker, the Mayor of Frankfurt, who is also the Antisemitism Commissioner for the federal state of Hesse. He remarked: “The comparison made by Heusgen between Israel’s actions and the terrorism of Hamas damages solidarity with Israel and is unfortunately apt to promote Israeli-related antisemitism.”

Becker added: "The inclusion of Mr. Heusgen on the list of the Wiesenthal Center is more than a yellow card for Germany’s voting behavior at the United Nations.” He remarked: “Germany must show more solidarity toward Israel at the UN and decisively reject anti-Israel resolutions in the future.”

Israel’s Ambassador to Germany, Jeremy Issacharoff, delivered a murky statement, which only confused the situation. He told journalists: ["We can have differences at times on policy issues and that does not mean that if somebody disagrees with us that he is antisemitic." Issacharoff added that he thinks “people should be very cautious of attaching certain labels to people, particularly the charge of being antisemitic."](https://en.qantara.de/content/anti-semitism-separating-anti-semitism-from-criticism-of-israel)

Even without his immoral comparison, Heusgen cannot claim that he is free of responsibility when he casts Germany's anti-Israel vote at the U.N. Ambassadors are not preprogrammed robots. Humans have personal responsibilities for their acts, as is made clear by the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The bigger problem however is Germany. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism has been accepted for internal use by Germany. Its massive support for anti-Israel resolutions at the UN, while no similar series of resolutions exists against any other country, let alone any democracy, is an antisemitic act according to this definition.

The antisemitic votes by Germany at the UN must be seen in an even more negative light than those of other European countries. This, it goes without saying, is due to the country’s genocidal crimes that included the murder of 6 million Jews, among them 1.5 million children, during the Holocaust - this a short time ago, in their grandfathers' generation.

Perhaps a useful answer to each new German anti-Israel vote at the UN would be republishing one of the almost limitless crimes against Jews during the Second World War.

To give an example: On Heusgen's next vote against Israel, one could publicize the German murders in the Polish city of Przemysl. This is a particularly adequate choice because the killings started so early. The town was occupied for the first time by the Germans on September 15, 1939. Between September 16 -19, more than 600 Jews were executed by them. Afterwards, most of the town was turned over to the Soviet Union. Before their withdrawal the Germans burnt down the Old Synagogue, the Hassidic prayer house, the Tempel Synagogue and parts of the Jewish quarter.

In the war against the Soviet Union, the Germans reconquered Przemysl on June 28, 1941. In the course of the following years almost all Jews were murdered. Of about 17,000 Jews living in Przemysl when the Germans arrived the second time, only about 300 managed to survive the war.

There is no shortage of possibilities.

If many pro-Israel organizations and individuals participate in such publicity each time Germany votes against Israel at the UN, its government might begin to have second thoughts. They may question whether the vote is worth the renewed publicity about the horrible crimes of their grandfathers' generation.