The United Nations Has Lost It

June 20, 2016

By Yair Lapid

The Times of Israel

<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-united-nations-has-lost-it/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=6007a028ea-2016_06_21&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-6007a028ea-55284149>

The following is an edited version of a speech delivered by Yair Lapid to the Israel Law Center conference in Jerusalem.

The United Nations has lost it. When it comes to Israel the UN has lost credibility, lost common sense, and more than anything lost its most important asset – its integrity.

At the end of March, I stood in Geneva, with hundreds of protesters, wrapped in Israeli flags. We stood beneath the Broken Chair Monument which stands opposite the United Nations Human Rights Council. Inside, in the elegant hall, there was a debate, another debate, about Israel.

The UN Human Rights Council’s treatment of Israel strayed from the boundaries of legitimate criticism long ago. In the past decade the council has voted for 61 resolutions condemning human rights abuses across the world and 67 resolutions which condemned Israel.

Let me repeat that — The council has condemned Israel, a democratic country which upholds international law, **more times than the rest of the world combined**.

Israel is the only country on earth which warrants its own agenda item in the UN Human Rights Council. Agenda item 7 dictates that every time the council meets there will be a ‘discussion of the human rights situation in Israel’. This discussion happens irrespective of whether or not there have been reports of human rights violations. It happens without a factual examination of the complaints lodged by Palestinians, usually allies or members of the various terror organizations that are sworn to destroy Israel.

For the United Nations, this just doesn’t matter.

Together with me, under the Broken Chair, stood some of the victims: An impressive young man whose father, an Israeli peace activist, was murdered by a suicide bomber on a Jerusalem bus. A woman who went for a hike with a friend and her Labrador and was attacked by Palestinian terrorists. They stabbed her friend to death, stabbed her dozens of times and then stabbed her dog as well. “I don’t know why” she said to me quietly, “but most people are more shocked that they killed the dog than my friend.”

After the demonstration, they went to speak before the council. They received a cold reception. While they bore witness to the loss of their loved ones, the delegates ate, intentionally spoke loudly, and walked in and out. No one said a word about Israel defending women’s rights and gay rights. No one said a word about Israel’s Arab citizens, sitting in its parliament and on its Supreme Court. In short, no one said a word about Israel being a thriving democracy embodying as its way of life everything the UN exists to promote.

Israel’s enemies, on the other hand, hang gay people from telephone poles, believe women are the property of their husbands and obviously don’t believe in institutions like the United Nations.

A few months after the embarrassing meeting in Geneva, the World Health Organization, another organ of the UN, held its annual meeting. As expected, the meeting dealt with questions of mortality, life expectancy, spread of disease and the need for vaccines. But the assembly also included one weird exception: It included a harsh condemnation of only one country, Israel.

The resolution condemned what it termed the “Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights.” There was no explanation how this might be relevant to health issues. Two hundred meters from the Israeli Golan, in Syria, hundreds of thousands of men, women and children are being massacred and that wasn’t mentioned even once.

In fact, the only connection between the Israeli Golan and health issues is that for the past few years Israel has quietly rescued hundreds of Syrian children who were injured in the fighting and treated them in our hospitals.

The resolution also contained a series of false “facts” based on disgraceful Palestinian propaganda in a report presented to the WHO. For example the report argues that “Israel injects Palestinians with viruses which cause cancer.” This is a monstrous accusation which wouldn’t be out of place in Der Sturmer, and yet it was published without a shred of proof.

The report was also decorated with photographs meant to enhance the drama. One, which was captioned “Taken during the Israeli war on Gaza 2014,” is an image of a simulated attack on Tehran which appeared on a popular blog a few years ago. The mountains surrounding the Iranian capital were removed using Photoshop to increase credibility. Another photograph is captioned, “The devastation caused by the Israeli war on Gaza in 2014.” It was actually taken in Beirut in early 2000s.

All this, in an official United Nations report.

If you’re still not convinced that something twisted and irrational is happening you can visit the United Nations headquarters in New York.

There you will find a permanent exhibition which deals with the Palestinian refugee problem. If you look carefully at the statistics, you’ll notice something strange: In 1948, during Israel’s War of Independence, around seven hundred thousand Palestinians fled or were exiled. Each one is an individual tragedy but it’s worth remembering that Israel wasn’t the aggressor in that war.

The United Nations voted for the creation of a Jewish state and in response the young State of Israel was attacked by seven Arab armies. During the fighting, many Palestinians left, because they were told that Israel was on the verge of collapse, that all the Jews would be massacred, and the Palestinians would get their homes and cities. Thank God that didn’t happen. The refugees had nowhere to return to. A tragedy for them, but one that happens in war. Actually, at that particular time it happened all around the globe, on much bigger scales.

This is where the bizarre process starts: Since 1948 not a single Palestinian has been expelled from Israel. In 1950 UNRWA – the United Nation organization in charge of helping the Palestinian refugees, was founded. At that time, it listed seven hundred and fifty thousand Palestinians. That number is most likely inflated but let’s use it for the sake of discussion. The absurdity comes next: As of 2014, UNRWA lists no less than five million Palestinian refugees.

In other words, without the expulsion of a single Palestinian, the UN has listed four million new Palestinian refugees. How did that happen?

The answer is that the Palestinians are the only nation in the world – the only one! – Where the status of refugee can be passed down the generations.

Palestinians become refugees irrespective of whether they were born in a refugee camp in Lebanon, the Latin Quarter in Paris or a Villa in Qatar. It is total insanity.

My father was expelled from his home in Novi Sad in Serbia by the Nazis. He moved to Israel and built his home here. Does anyone in the world treat me or my children as Serbian refugees?

Israel has over a million citizens who lived in the Arab world and were expelled or chased out of their homes just for being Jewish. Why does no-one treat them as refugees worthy of compensation?

Why is it that only the Palestinians can be born in one country but instantly be granted refugee status from a country they’ve never been to?

And if we’re on the subject – what is the justification for the existence of UNRWA? Why do they have their own organization while all the other refugees in the world – from Darfur to Rwanda to Syria to ISIS controlled territories – do not?

It’s worth mentioning that UNRWA’s work is mostly in the Palestinian territories and that UNRWA employs Palestinian workers on western salaries. As the number of refugees grows, so too does UNRWA. If they accept the reality – that there are very few refugees left from those who fled in 1948 – the organization would shrink and they would lose their place of work.

To prevent that they built a new and cynical industry: they manufacture refugees. The UN encourages this distortion to continue.

So, what’s actually happening?

The answer is that the United Nations has become a hostage to its own structure. Non-democratic countries have a huge majority in the General Assembly and in most of the committees.

What used to be the “non-aligned movement” has grown to include 136 countries, many of which are Islamic states, or dependent on oil money. These countries distorted the aims of the UN. They totally altered its way of functioning. They are partners with BDS organizations.

Instead of an organization which protects freedom, democracy, liberal values and world peace, parts of the UN have become the opposite. They have become collaborators with fundamentalist Islam.

The automatic majority of the non-democratic countries has become an automatic majority against Israel.

In this context, the relative silence of the United States and other democracies is distressing. The United States funds 22% of the UN budget. In fact six countries – the United States, Japan, France, Britain, Italy and Germany – fund around 65% of the budget.

All that is needed is for those countries to raise their voice and say — loud and clear — they are unwilling to allow this to continue. The wild and fabricated attacks on Israel need to stop.

The UN can’t take American money, American resources and American support and use them for a campaign that supports the destruction of the Jewish state. If the UN Human Rights Council wants democratic countries to continue to support it, it should act according to democratic values. It should be based first and foremost on the truth.

Attacks on a democratic country committed to human rights in the service of murderous terror organizations is not in the UN mandate. There is no reason the United States and other democracies should agree to fund it.

During my last visit to Washington I discussed this with Senators and Members of Congress, both Democrats and Republicans. They all agreed that the situation is intolerable.

The American taxpayer should no longer consent to their money being used in this way. They don’t work hard and pay taxes for that.

On the other hand, when I discussed it with a senior American diplomat at the United Nations he argued that “it’s better to change from within.”

That sounds reasonable enough but we’re too late.

Those who hate Israel and hate democracy have beaten us to it.

They’ve already changed the UN from within.

The organization which preached justice and equality has been the subject of a hostile takeover.

It’s time for the world democracies to regain control on the UN.