Jerusalem Pushes Democracies to Reject UN Gaza Report

June 24, 2015

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The Jerusalem Post

http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Jerusalem-pushes-democracies-to-reject-UN-Gaza-report-406953

A day after the Human Rights Council [presented its report](http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/UN-to-issue-findings-on-war-crimes-in-2014-Gaza-conflict-406763) on last summer’s war in Gaza, Israeli diplomats began trying on Tuesday to convince as many countries as possible on the 47-member council not to endorse the report when, as expected, it comes up for a vote next week.

With 30 percent of the council made up of either Muslim countries that can be counted on to vote against Israel, or those like Cuba, Bolivia and Venezuela who do not have diplomatic ties with Israel, government officials acknowledge that winning a vote is almost impossible.

The goal, therefore, is to get as many democracies as possible – a “moral minority” – to vote in the council against endorsing the report, in the hope that this will denude it of legitimacy and moral authority.

The diplomatic efforts are at this time being led by the Foreign Ministry. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who called the prime ministers of countries on the UNHRC in 2009 after the issuing of the Goldstone Report that year that accused Israel of targeting civilians during Operation Cast Lead, has not yet made any similar phone calls.

In general, the sense in Jerusalem is that the report issued Monday – which charged that both Israel and the Palestinians may have been guilty of war crimes – attracted a great deal less attention abroad than the Goldstone Report.

The ministry’s director-general for Western Europe, Aviv Shir- On, issued directives Tuesday to Israeli diplomats in Europe to try and persuade their counterparts to voice opposition to the report when it is scheduled to be discussed in Geneva next week.

According to Ynet, Shir-On sent a diplomatic cable to Israel’s representatives in Europe saying Jerusalem expected the EU countries – especially those on the council – to reject the report and its conclusions, and to make that clear in the relevant forums in the EU and in Geneva.

There are eight EU countries on the panel – Estonia, France, Germany, Latvia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK. France, Ireland and Portugal have voted against Israel in some recent high-profile UN Mideast votes.

In addition to the EU countries, the US is also on the UNHRC, as are a number of other friendly countries that might be convinced to either vote against or abstain, such as Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Montenegro, Nigeria, Paraguay, South Korea and Russia.

In the cable, Shir-On said Israel regretted the one-sided nature of the UNHRC and the mandate it gave the commission, and called on Israeli representatives to emphasize the role that the original chairman of the commission – William Schabas – played in the investigation, highlighting the fact that he signed off on numerous documents appended to the report.

Schabas was forced to step down after it was revealed that he once received payment from the PLO for legal services. He was replaced by former New York supreme court judge Mary McGowan Davis.

Israel employed similar attempts in 2009 to mobilize democratic countries to vote against endorsing the Goldstone Report, but to meager results.

That report was endorsed by the UNHRC 25-6, with 11 abstentions, and five countries – including Britain and France – declining to vote. The report then went to the General Assembly, where a follow-up resolution was adopted by a vote of 114 in favor, 18 against and 44 abstentions.