In Jerusalem, Nikki Haley Says She Has ‘No Patience’ for ‘Bullies’ Like the UN

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The winds at the United Nations are changing to Israel’s benefit, US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley said Wednesday in Jerusalem, during her first-ever visit to Israel, calling the international body a “bully.”

“We’re starting to see a turn in New York. I think they know they can’t keep responding in the way they’ve been responding,” she said at a meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, referring to countries that routinely bash the Jewish state at the UN’s various agencies.

“They sense that the tone has changed. We were talking with some ambassadors in Geneva that are all on the Human Rights Council, and we talked to them about Agenda Item 7,” Haley said. “Some of them were embarrassed by it. They acknowledge the fact that it just makes no sense.”

Haley was referring to the fact that since 2007, Israel has been the only country whose alleged human rights abuses are regularly discussed in the framework of a single permanent item on the Human Rights Council’s agenda.

On Tuesday, at a speech in Geneva, Haley had urged the council to abandon Agenda Item 7 (“the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories”), which singles out Israel for perpetual censure. If the 47-member body failed to do so, the US would quit and seek to promote human rights in other forums, [she threatened](http://www.timesofisrael.com/us-to-quit-human-rights-council-if-it-wont-reform-haley-indicates/).

“There is no legitimate human rights reason for this agenda item to exist,” she said later Tuesday, at the Graduate Institute of Geneva, hours before taking off for Tel Aviv. “It is the central flaw that turns the Human Rights Council from an organization that can be a force for universal good, into an organization that is overwhelmed by a political agenda.”

Welcoming her in his office Wednesday morning, Netanyahu thanked the US envoy and US President Donald Trump for their staunch support of Israel, including in international bodies such as the UN.

“Thank you for all your help and standing up for Israel, standing up for the truth, which is standing up for America. Actually, I think it’s standing up for the UN as it was originally conceived,” Netanyahu said. “People appreciate truth. We have an ancient Hebrew saying that when somebody tells a truth, you can feel it. So people feel it, they not only understand it, they feel it. And we feel it.”

The prime minister went on to praise Haley’s “uncommon common sense,” and said he already sees her efforts bearing fruit.

“President Trump and you, I think, have changed the discourse, have drawn new standards, and everybody’s taking up, and that’s great,” he said. “I think it makes a world of difference, both for Israel and the US. Again, I felt that the UN would collapse, you know, that whole scaffolding of lies would just collapse. I think you’ve put in that simple word, truth.”

Haley said she was surprised by the tremendous love Israelis have showered her with.

“You know, that’s all I’ve done — tell the truth — and the reaction is kind of overwhelming,” she said. “It was a habit. It was something that we’re so used to doing. And if there’s anything I have no patience for it is bullies, and the UN was being such a bully to Israel, because they could.”

After her meeting with Netanyahu, Haley met with President Reuven Rivlin, who likewise praised her for having started a process of change at the UN in Israel’s favor.

“With your support we see the beginning of a new era. Israel is no longer alone at the UN. Israel is no longer the UN’s punching bag,” he said.

But while Israel’s standing at the UN has improved, “sadly, we have a long way to go,” the president added, “both in holding to account, public statements made by officials, and in supporting regulation to reduce the ridiculous number of discussions and resolutions against Israel. This is also true in the Human Rights Council — which has been hijacked as a weapon against Israel — and in UNESCO, where they seek to rub out the history of the Jewish people.”

Haley responded by saying that it was “an absolute thrill to be here in Israel” and expression her appreciation for the support she has received from Israelis.

“But I feel somewhat guilty because all I did at the United Nations was tell the truth. I have never taken kindly to bullies, and the UN has bullied Israel for a very long time, and we are not going to let that happen anymore,” she said.

“It is a new day for Israel in the United Nations. We just got back from Geneva, talking about the Human Rights Council, and hopefully it will be a new day at the Human Rights Council when it comes to Israel,” she said.

Later on Wednesday, she was set to head to Bethlehem for meetings with senior Palestinian officials.

Haley is also scheduled to visit Jerusalem Old City, likely including a stop at the Western Wall. The visit is billed as private, which means that she will not be accompanied by Israeli officials, lest it be construed as a tacit recognition of Israeli sovereignty in East Jerusalem.

Also on Wednesday, Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely met with Haley and gave her a 1,400-year-old gold pendant uncovered in the City of David, just outside the Old City.

On Thursday, Haley will take helicopter rides to the Gaza periphery and Israel’s northern border. In the south, she is scheduled to meet residents from Kibbutz Nahal Oz and tour a tunnel built by Hamas to attack Israelis living near the border. She will also receive a security briefing by the IDF deputy chief of staff, Aviv Kochavi.

In the north, she will received briefings from Israeli security officials and meet with representatives from the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and, at the border with Syria, with officials from the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).

“We thanked Ambassador Haley for her steadfast support of Israel. We also discussed the challenges facing our two countries and how we can further strengthen our cooperation at the UN,” Israel’s UN Ambassador Danny Danon, who is accompanying her during the visit, said after her meetings with Netanyahu and Rivlin. “Together with the US, now is the time to enact real reforms at the UN so that it will reflect Israel’s true stature in the international community.”

On Friday, Haley will visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust museum and tour Tel Aviv, before heading back home.