**Hamas Welcomed at UN Headquarters in Geneva**

Only the United Nations could twist the security threat so that

the terrorist front man became the victim.

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On March 19, 2012 the UN Human Rights Council and its UN staff in Geneva advertised and facilitated an event featuring a representative of the terrorist organization Hamas. Facing an immediate outcry, a massive misinformation campaign is now underway to protect the already discredited UN body. But there is no avoiding the facts: the UN handed a UN entrance pass and a UN microphone, in a UN room, to Hamas’s own Ismail al-Ashqar.

US, European and Israeli laws designate Hamas as a terror group. Hamas’s hate-filled Charter advocates genocide, or in its words: “Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it…The Day of Judgment will not come about until Muslims fight the Jews (killing the Jews)…” The organization is pursuing that goal on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, the Council published a formal UN “Bulletin” – with the Council’s name splashed across the top and a formal UN symbol number – containing the following message. Anyone wanting to catch a lecture by a Hamas human rights authority should head off to Meeting Room XXVII in the UN’s Palais des Nations from 10 to 12 Monday morning.

Or in more formal UN-eze “Human Rights Council, Nineteenth session, Geneva, Bulletin of informal meetings, Held in parallel to the session, Monday, 19 March 2012…Subject: Arrest of parliamentarians, Public. A/HRC/19/BI/16.”

Sent out to face the subsequent barrage of criticism, Director of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva Corinne Momal-Vanian told AP that the meeting was “on the sides of the Human Rights Council session" and any UN-accredited group “can organize side events and invite speakers of its choice.”

Indeed, the event featuring the Hamas member of the Palestinian Legislative Council was organized by the UN-accredited NGO "Maarij Foundation for Peace and Development." But here are a few facts Momal-Vanian managed to leave out.

UN facilities would only have been available to a non-governmental organization that had been awarded UN accreditation and then only after they had requested the services from the UN secretariat. Though the UN bulletin carries a standard disclaimer for what may or may not be said during such events, the application to hold the meeting in the first place must have been vetted and approved by UN staff.

Moreover, locating meetings on the “side” of the Human Rights Council’s regular session – which is now in full swing – is a deliberate attempt to influence information flow to Council participants. And while in theory any UN group can ask permission to hold a side event, it is no accident that approval is actually granted to a raft of Israel-bashing NGOs.

This week alone radical organizations with extreme ideologies are scheduled to hold two more two-hour sessions on UN premises: “Human rights in Palestine” and “Follow-up to the Goldstone Report.” The organizing NGOs, including Al Haq, BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, and Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples, all hold official UN accreditation. Standard fare is to claim that Israel’s creation was a catastrophe that has to be walked back; Israel is an apartheid state; Israelis are foreigners transplanted onto Arab land; Israel should be subject to debilitating sanctions. BADIL’s website and activities, for example, are studded with antisemitic images and rants.

The controversy comes at an inopportune moment for the Obama administration, which is in the middle of a drive to renew its three-year term on the Human Rights Council. So somehow a twitter campaign joined Monday’s effort to ward off the public relations disaster of a terrorist UN human rights buff.

Some examples. Tweet: “NGOs can invite people without the UN being aware or responsible.” In fact, no person can get through UN security at the Palais des Nations without their name being provided to UN officials in advance; officials must then grant access and issue a UN pass. Even the UN spokesperson has not alleged that al-Ashqar evaded security and snuck in.

Then there was this tweet: “Hamas representative invited by NGO is distraction.” Welcoming a terrorist into the midst of a facility supposedly dedicated to human rights is indeed a distraction – from the UN’s raison d’etre. Another read: “Contrary to Hamas boast, its representative spoke to empty room.” Photos of the audience posted on the web contradicted that tweet. And then there was the bleat: “Invited not by UN but Sudanese group.” Except that the Sudanese group was not just any bunch of hate-mongers, but UN-accredited, and nothing would have prevented UN staff from turning al-Ashqar away at the door.

According to Momal-Vanian, however, what worried the UN most about the Hamas agent’s visit was this: “the global body assessed the possibility of security threats in connection with the event and allowed it to go ahead.”

A perversion from beginning to end. Only the UN could twist the security threat so that the terrorist front man became the victim.