

The U.N.'s Israel Obsession

In 1948, when the armies of five surrounding Arab dictatorships invaded tiny, newborn Israel—in what the secretary general of the Arab League announced was a “war of extermination” against “the Jews”—the United Nations sat on its ass. And did not send a fact-finding mission.

But, oh, how the U.N. has been making up for that oversight ever since. For more than 50 years now, the Jews have been its favorite subject.

Among the nearly 200 nations represented at the U.N., only Israel has ever been assigned special—reduced—membership privileges, its ambassadors formally barred, for 53 straight years ending only recently, from election to the Security Council. Meanwhile, and right up to the present day, that same Security Council has devoted fully a third of its energy and criticism to the policies of a single country: Israel. The U.N. Commission on Human Rights, which regularly—and unrepovingly—accepts delegations from any number of homicidal tyrannies across the globe, has issued fully a quarter of its official condemnations to a single (democratic) country: Israel.

There has been a genocide in Rwanda, an ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, periodic and horrifying communal “strife” in Indonesia’s East Timor, the “disappearance” of a few hundred thousand refugees in the Congo, a decades-long and culturally devastating occupation of Tibet by the People’s Republic of China . . . but none of those U.N. member states has ever been subjected to the rebuke of a General Assembly “emergency special session.” Israel has, though, repeatedly, simply for refusing to surrender in the face of terrorist attacks that have killed hundreds and injured thousands of its citizens—murders that no U.N. resolution has ever so much as mentioned.

No fewer than *four* separate administrative units within the U.N.—two of them directly supervised by Kofi Annan’s governing secretariat—do nothing but spend millions of dollars annually on the production and worldwide distribution of propaganda questioning Israel’s right to exist. The “Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People

and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories,” for example, “investigates” Israel’s continued “practice” of “occupying” not just the territory taken in the 1967 war, but also the land within its internationally recognized, pre-1967 borders.

And then there is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, an operation originally established in December 1949 to assist those Palestinian refugees created by the Arab world’s botched attempt at a second Final Solution. UNRWA, as it happens, is centrally relevant to its parent organization’s latest outburst of naked Israelophobia. Because UNRWA wholly funds and largely administers the West Bank refugee camp in Jenin where the Israeli army is purported—by various Palestinian militants and local U.N. officials—to have just perpetrated a “massacre” of “unarmed civilians.” It is to the site of this alleged “atrocious” that Kofi Annan now intends to dispatch a commission of inquiry chaired by Yasser Arafat’s favorite European diplomat, former president Martti Ahtisaari of Finland, and seconded by Cornelio Sommaruga, retired chief of the International Red Cross, a man who once likened the Star of David to a swastika.

All by themselves, Annan’s personnel choices here are a genuine scandal, and as this issue of THE WEEKLY STANDARD goes to press, Israel’s understandable objections, to Sommaruga in particular, have left it a still open question when and whether the secretary general’s designees will ever be allowed to reach their destination. And if, at the end of the day, they aren’t? That will be perfect justice, we think. The “world community” will howl, of course, and Israel’s many enemies will believe the worst. But they believe the worst already. And they will continue to believe the worst no matter what. And, quite apart from the controversy over what its staff should look like, the whole idea of a U.N. fact-finding mission to Jenin is scandalous to begin with, it seems to us—an assault on Israel’s honor, even its basic legitimacy as an independent nation, that no similarly situated democracy would ever be expected to endure.

Assuming Annan’s investigators do eventually make

their way to Jenin, is it possible they might actually find the “facts” they are looking for? No, almost certainly not. Media accounts of Israel’s incursion into a football-field-sized sector of the camp have bubbled over with lurid details worthy of a medieval peasant’s worst anti-Semitic fantasies. And the peasant-in-chief has been a U.N. official, UNRWA commissioner general Peter Hansen, who has given dozens of lip-smacking interviews recounting “wholesale obliteration,” “a human catastrophe that has few parallels in recent history,” “helicopters . . . strafing civilian residential areas,” and “bodies . . . piling up” in “mass graves.” Some of this carnage Hansen even claims to have seen “with my own eyes.” But he is a bald-faced liar. The Israelis have been out of Jenin—and foreign journalists and other international observers have been back in—for more than a week. And no evidence, literally *nothing* that would indicate the presence of a civilian “massacre,” has yet emerged.

Quite the contrary, rescue workers in Jenin have so far recovered the bodies of six—not the rumored six hundred, but *six*—women, children, and elderly Palestinians. This, in a now ruined central area of the camp where countless armed gunmen rained days of nonstop sniper fire on Israeli foot patrols from the windows of still-occupied residences they had booby-trapped with high explosives. This is a “massacre”?

And why, even if its death toll had proved a hundred times higher, would it warrant a U.N. fact-finding mission? In 1993, just after the events lately made famous by Holly-

wood’s *Black Hawk Down*, a two-week U.S. bombing campaign against Mogadishu killed a *thousand* Somali civilians. During the whole of the present intifada, now six months old, far fewer Palestinians than that have died as Israel has attempted to rescue itself from a national security threat far graver and more immediate than any America faced in East Africa. But did it ever occur to the United Nations to convene an inquest into the “human catastrophe” that was Somalia? It did not.

Maybe the U.N. picks on Israel simply because it can. Or maybe, just maybe, there is a darker impulse at play.

Which would explain why the U.N. has spent decades, in the guise of refugee assistance, providing active, organized, and enthusiastic auxiliary services to the most delusional and violent strains of Jew-hating Palestinian irreverentism. It bears mentioning, though one rarely hears it mentioned, that the UNRWA camp at Jenin has been for years what the Palestinians call *a’simat al-istashidin*, the “suicides’ capital,” from which dozens of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Fatah, Al Aksa, and Tanzim terrorist attacks have been launched, killing hundreds of Israelis.

UNRWA funds and staffs the schools of Jenin, where, from fall through spring each year, children are taught that all of “Palestine,” from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, belongs to them. During summer vacation, those very same schools host training camps in which those very same students are instructed in the arts of kidnapping and rock-throwing and bomb-manufacturing and martyrdom. UNRWA rents the buses that regularly take residents of Jenin on tours of the Israeli countryside—where “their” property, “stolen” by the Jews, is carefully pointed out. UNRWA allows its food warehouses in Jenin to do double duty as munitions dumps. UNRWA pretends not to know that explosives and counterfeit currency factories are housed in the public shelters it has constructed in Jenin. UNRWA cannot understand how it might be that its own administrative offices in Jenin are festooned with graffiti celebrating some of the world’s most notorious terrorist organizations. Or how some of the world’s most notorious terrorists might have found their way onto the agency’s *payroll*—to the point where the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, extreme even in the context of Palestinian extremism, now openly controls the UNRWA workers’ union.

This same United Nations, the blood of Israeli civilians still wet on its hands, now dares to question the morality of a modest, defensive, and long-overdue Israeli reprisal?

In curricular materials published by the Palestinian Authority’s Ministry of Education, “Objective Five” for high school history teachers reads as follows: “The student will understand why the people of the world hate the Jews.” It is a question for the ages. Zionism may no longer be racism at the United Nations. But anti-Semitism is forever.

—David Tell, for the Editors

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