[International Law Expert Says British Authorities Are ‘Obeying Demands’ of Anti-Israel Activists (INTERVIEW)](http://www.algemeiner.com/2015/12/14/intl-law-expert-uk-authorities-must-not-succumb-to-anti-israel-blacklisting/" \o "Permanent Link to International Law Expert Says British Authorities Are ‘Obeying Demands’ of Anti-Israel Activists (INTERVIEW))

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<http://www.algemeiner.com/2015/12/14/intl-law-expert-uk-authorities-must-not-succumb-to-anti-israel-blacklisting/>

Authorities in the United Kingdom appear to be dancing to the tune of local anti-Israel activists, international law expert Avi Bell told The Algemeiner on Monday.

His comments came days after [Israeli media reported](http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4738408,00.html) that British authorities apologized to the Israeli government for “mistakenly” detaining an IDF reserve officer a few weeks ago.

The officer, who had participated in Operation Protective Edge in Gaza in the summer of 2014, was detained for several hours of questioning as a “war criminal” when he landed in the UK for a recent business trip. After intervention on the part of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the IDF’s operations directorate and international law division, the man was released.

The incident was the result of complaints filed by anti-Israel organizations in Europe, who are conducting a campaign to punish Israel for alleged war crimes committed against the Palestinians in Gaza. The name of the man in question, it is believed, got onto one of the “blacklists” of these organizations, and when it was established that it was a case of mistaken identity, he was let go.

In an interview with The Algemeiner, Bell said, “The British authorities arrested an Israeli under the power of universal jurisdiction. Apparently, anti-Israel activists produced a list of Israelis that they want arrested in the UK on the basis of false charges of war crimes, and the relevant British authorities are obeying the demands of the anti-Israel activists. According to media reports, the only reason the British released the Israeli was that he was not on the list of people that the anti-Israel activists demand be held for a show trial. These reports do not show that the British have apologized for the outrage of agreeing to arrest Israelis on trumped-up charges from a list prepared by anti-Israel activists. Rather, they indicate that the British have only apologized for arresting someone who was not on the list.”

Bell explained the phenomenon of a foreign government with which Israel has diplomatic relations – like the UK – detaining an Israeli traveler at the airport.

“International law generally forbids states from arresting citizens of another country to stand trial for acts that took place in another part of the world,” Bell told The Algemeiner. “However, there is an exception to this general rule called universal jurisdiction. Universal jurisdiction allows the arresting and trying of foreigners for foreign acts when the arrest and trial concern the alleged commission of very serious crimes, such as war crimes and crimes against humanity.”

Still, said Bell, professor of law at the University of San Diego and Bar Ilan University in Israel, “It is very rare that countries actually use their authority under the power of universal jurisdiction. No country, for example, has ever invoked universal jurisdiction to arrest and try Palestinian terrorists, or any other terrorists and war criminals that target Israeli Jews.”

This, he claimed, “is clearly a violation of the legal rights of the blacklisted Israelis, who are being punished for their national origin and ethnicity, at the behest of anti-Israel activists. However, there’s no clear way to vindicate the legal rights of the Israelis. The whole point of the blacklisting is to harass the Israelis and force them to go through a legal proceeding at the end of which they will be released because they are innocent. Any harassed Israelis who challenge the blacklist in court will pay the price of being in court.”

The only realistic resolution for this problem, he concluded, is diplomatic.

“The British must identify the government official or officials who are harassing Israelis according to the blacklist, and subject them to appropriate legal and disciplinary proceedings for their abuse of power and violation of the human rights of the blacklisted Israelis. I hope that the British government will not be permitted to sweep this under the rug.”

In the meantime, some former Israeli officers aren’t taking any chances.

“A,” an IDF infantry platoon sergeant in the reserves who fought in the Gaza war — and works for an Israeli high-tech firm — said he never dared share his photos from that operation on Facebook, even ones that were not sensitive from a security point of view.

“It was pretty clear to most of us that we should keep a low profile during and after the war, and not have our faces recognized on social media,” he told The Algemeiner on Monday. “We didn’t want our names and faces to be circulating, with the idea that we might want to take a trip abroad. Furthermore, we began to sense a change in the international atmosphere. High-ranking officers like colonels and above have always had to be especially cautious when traveling. What has changed is the rank of the soldiers who now have to worry. Though we were instructed by our commanders not to expose any details of our military service, this was always explained as part of a security measure; it was never spelled out to us that it was to keep us from being arrested as war criminals abroad.”