

"Peace" and Prejudice at the United Nations

January 20, 2014

By Claudia Rosett

Forbes

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/claudiarosett/2014/01/20/peace-and-prejudice-at-the-united-nations/>

Claiming concerns about harming the Middle East “peace process,” the United Nations cultural agency has abruptly postponed an exhibition on Jewish ties to the Holy Land. This display was scheduled to open Jan. 20 at the Paris headquarters of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). But after 22 Arab states sent a letter protesting this plan, UNESCO put out a press release last Friday saying the exhibition would be delayed, “to avoid confrontation and politicization.”

Meanwhile, during the same week in which UNESCO was declaring it a peace-promoting act to jilt the Jewish exhibition, the U.N. General Assembly in New York was celebrating the launch of an “[International](#) Year of Solidarity With the Palestinian People.” According to the U.N. press office, top UN officials, including Secretary-General [Ban Ki-moon](#), welcomed this launch with calls for “the observance to be used to redouble efforts to achieve a durable peace between Israel and Palestine.”

Evidently the U.N. recipe for peace is to promote prejudice — shunning Israel at the behest of Arab states, while deploying ever more U.N. resources to boost the Palestinians. For decades, such bigotry has been the hallmark of the U.N. approach. Not only has it failed to produce peace; if anything, it has made peace more elusive.

The U.N. has become a mill of favors and special treatment for the Palestinians, to an extent arguably unmatched by its attentions to any other group on the planet. As a result, the Palestinians have ever more incentive to exploit the U.N. to diplomatically marginalize Israel, and ever less incentive to honor their own promises of peace. In the 1993 Oslo accords, the Palestine Liberation Organization promised to recognize Israel’s right to exist, and resolve all outstanding issues of permanent status “through negotiations.” Instead, the Palestinian Authority has been renegeing on this agreement, seeking a path to statehood by applying for, and getting, full

membership in UNESCO in 2011, and enhanced status in the U.N. General Assembly in 2012, as a non-member Observer State. The web site of the Palestinian Observer Mission to the U.N. includes a link to the site of the PLO, where the logo still features a map on which the state of Israel has been erased.

For the special benefit of the Palestinians, the U.N. General Assembly since 1975 has maintained the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. This committee has its own secretariat within the U.N., called the Division for Palestinian Rights. Together, courtesy of U.N. resources bankrolled in large part by U.S. taxpayers, they organize international meetings and conferences, liaise with civil society groups and produce studies and publications dedicated to the Question of Palestine. They also organize activities and exhibitions at U.N. offices around the world to mark an annual Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People — an event now transmogrified by the U.N. into the current Year of Solidarity.

The U.N.'s Department of Information hosts a special information service devoted entirely to the Palestinians (UNISPAL). And while refugees from every other part of the globe come under the umbrella of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the U.N. for the past 64 years has run a special refugee agency dedicated to serving the Palestinians: the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Opened for business in 1950 as a "temporary" agency to serve some 860,000 Palestinian refugees, UNRWA has taken root as a permanent entitlement system, conferring refugee status down the generations to include some five million clients today. In 2011, UNRWA reported receiving \$948 million toward its \$1.2 billion budget, including \$239 million from the U.S. — its largest donor.

Then there is the U.N.'s chronic practice of condemning Israel and boosting the Palestinians, with round after round, year after year, of resolutions in the General Assembly, as well as in U.N. bodies such as the Human Rights Council and UNESCO. According to the Geneva-based monitoring group UN Watch, UNESCO since 2009 has passed at least 46 resolutions against Israel, one against Syria, and none against Iran, North Korea or Sudan.

All this is just a sampling of the ways in which, far from promoting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, the U.N., with its brazen bigotry, does

plenty to poison the well. Yet the U.N. would now have us believe that the cause of Middle East peace will be served by UNESCO's shelving an exhibition on the history of the Jewish people, while in New York top U.N. officials rhapsodize about launching a year of of solidarity with the Palestinian people. Where's the U.N. Year of Solidarity with Israel?

Ms. Rosett is journalist-in-residence with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, and heads its Investigative Reporting Project.