Netanyahu Blasts UNHRC for Ratifying Gaza War Report as Projectile from Sinai Hits Israel

July 3, 2015

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The Jerusalem Post

<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Netanyahu-blasts-UNHRC-for-ratifying-Gaza-war-report-as-projectile-from-Sinai-hits-Israel-407931>

Those who are afraid of coming out against terrorism in the end will be attacked by terrorism, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Friday in response to the passing of an anti-Israel UN Human Rights Council resolution on the Gaza war last summer.

“The UN Human Rights Council is not interested in the facts and is not really interested in human rights,” Netanyahu said. “On the day on which Israel was fired at from Sinai, and at a time when ISIS [Islamic State] is committing vicious terrorist attacks in Egypt, as [Syrian President Bashar] Assad slaughters his people in Syria and as the number of arbitrary executions per annum climbs in Iran – the UN Human Rights Council decides to condemn the State of Israel, for no fault of its own, for acting to defend itself from a murderous terrorist organization.”

Israel’s hands will not be tied and it will “continue to defend its citizens against those who call for its destruction and take daily action to achieve this goal,” Netanyahu said.

The United States was the only country to support Israel and oppose a resolution that ostensibly holds Israel and Palestinian terrorist organizations accountable for human rights violations during Operation Protective Edge but was largely understood to be speaking about holding Israel accountable for possible war crimes.

The resolution passed by a vote of 41 in favor, one against and five abstentions; the US cast the only “no” vote.

All eight of the EU countries on the panel – Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Latvia, Estonia, Ireland, Portugal and the Netherlands – voted for the resolution.

In a historic first in UN votes on Israel, however, India did not vote for the Palestinians, but rather abstained, along with two important African states – Ethiopia and Kenya – as well Paraguay and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In recent days, Netanyahu spoke with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as well as Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta.

Indian government sources were quoted in the Indian media back in December as saying the new Modi government was considering changing India’s automatic support for Palestinians at the UN and abstaining on those votes. Such a move was described at the time as a “tectonic shift” in the country’s foreign policy.

Despite the vote, a spokesman for India’s Foreign Ministry said afterward “there is no change in India’s long standing position on support to the Palestinian cause.”

Nevertheless, diplomatic sources in Israel described the Indian vote as “dramatic.” Officials in the Prime Minister’s Office, meanwhile, expressed appreciation for America’s “principled position” in voting against the “hypocritical” resolution.

Keith Harper, US ambassador to the UN in Geneva, explaining his country’s no vote, said: “We are troubled that this current resolution focuses exclusively on alleged Israeli violations without any expressed reference to Palestinian violations.”

He added that his country also was disappointed “that this council does not acknowledge the violent attacks directed at Israel [by Palestinian terrorist groups].”

Addressing the body, Israel’s ambassador to the UN Eviatar Manor said the resolution “is an anti-Israeli manifesto,” and that the UNHRC “has lost its bearing.”

The UNHRC, he said, was not a fair body or one with “moral integrity,” but rather a UN organ that is “highly politicized, obsessive with Israel, ignoring serious situations of human rights violations across the globe and spending its scarce resources of money and manpower on reports on my country.”

The body, he said, will neither succeed in delegitimizing Israel, nor in preventing it from defending its population.

Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riad Malki welcomed the passage of the resolution, saying: “There is no path to justice and peace without accountability.

“We will not accept that the repeated crimes [by Israel] against our people go unpunished.”

PLO Ambassador to the UN in Geneva Ibrahim Khraishi said everyone was “equal under the law” and that failure to hold Israel accountable for the war crimes it committed in Gaza created a double standard.

Prior to the UNHRC vote, British Ambassador to the UN in Geneva Julian Braithwaite said, “Israel has the right to defend itself against indiscriminate attack, but it is also a principle of international humanitarian law that the use of force in self defense must be proportionate.”

“International humanitarian law requires belligerents to distinguish between military and civilian targets. We have urged both sides to the conflict to act in a manner that is proportionate,” he said.

According to the UN, more than 2,100 Palestinians were killed during last summer’s 50-day war, of which 1,462 were civilians. Israel lost 67 soldiers and six civilians.

Israel holds that more than half of those Palestinians killed in Gaza were combatants and maintains that the UN figures were culled from Hamas sources and that the number of civilian casualties is significantly lower.

According to an Israeli report issued last month, of the 2,100 Palestinians killed, 761 were civilians, 936 were combatants and the true classification of another 428 people killed has not yet been determined.

A report by a UNHRC fact-finding mission that examined human rights violations during Operation Protective Edge concluded that both Israel and Palestinians armed groups may have committed war crimes last summer.

Friday’s resolution, which was based on that report, said there was a “need to ensure that all those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law are held to account through appropriate fair and independent domestic or international criminal justice mechanisms.”

It also “called upon the parties concerned to cooperate fully with the preliminary examination of the International Criminal Court and with any subsequent investigation that may be opened” with respect to human rights violations in the Palestinian territories.

In addition, the resolution called on Israel and the Palestinians to hold internal investigations into alleged human rights violations. Israel has held such judicial proceedings since last summer. The PA has promised that it will do so in the future.

The UNHRC resolutions carry political weight, but the UNHRC does not have the authority to ensure compliance with the Gaza resolution or any other resolutions it has issued against Israel.

The Palestinians, therefore, are focused on the possibly that the ICC could accept cases against Israel. The PA, which is a signatory to the Rome Statute that governs the court, has provided the ICC with material to allegedly show that Israel has committed war crimes against its people.

Israel, which is not a signatory to the Rome Statute, has not yet formally stated a position with respect to the ICC preliminary examination is now underway, but it fears such cooperation would be seen as a de-facto acceptance of the court’s jurisdiction.

India said it abstained from the vote on the UNHRC resolution precisely because it too was not a signatory to the Rome Statute.