U.N. Beats Familiar Anti-Israel Drum

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In an isolated trail along the Cliffs of Moher on Ireland’s west coast a sign has been posted with the following warning to hikers: “Beware of the bull.” This is a warning that could be helpfully printed on the cover of every publication relating to Israel issued by any United Nations agency, as the U.N. prepares to remind us yet again.

Next week the U.N. Human Rights Council, which includes such human rights luminaries as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan, is expected to release its “report” on last summer’s war in Gaza between Hamas and Israel. This was a conflict not only initiated by Hamas, but perpetuated by it for 50 days, in violation of innumerable truces to which it first agreed, and on which it then reneged.

The conflict was the third separate time in six years that Israeli civilians were subjected to some 5,000 rockets fired by Hamas, rockets both intended to harm Israelis and calculated to bring about the deaths of Palestinian civilians used by Hamas as human shields. It differed from similar conflicts in 2008 and 2012 in two respects. By last summer, Hamas could — and did — reach 80 percent of Israel’s population with its rockets. And Hamas added an elaborate system of tunnels built under Palestinians’ homes extending into Israel, for the purpose of staging raids that Hamas hoped would kill hundreds of Israelis.

Naturally, the U.N., owned for all practical purposes by the powerful Organization of Islamic Conference and the enviable petrodollars that Arab states bring to bear, is expected to issue another report condemning Israel. Its report, originally set to be released in March, was delayed after its lead investigator, William Schabas, was forced to resign amidst disclosures that not only had he declared Israeli leaders “criminals” before he asked to be hired to investigate them, but that he had recently been paid by the PLO for advocating on its behalf. After denying for months that there was anything about any of this that faintly resembled a conflict of interest, he stepped down just before the report was to be released, announcing that his work had been completed anyway.

The predictable chorus of those signed up to blame Israel regardless of the circumstances charges Israel, which struggled to stop the rockets and prevent the tunnel attacks, with deliberately killing Palestinian civilians. Streams of military experts who examined the evidence have pronounced these charges utter nonsense.

One recent study, authored by a team that included the former chief of staff of the U.S. Central Command and the former deputy commander of the U.S. European Command, found that the Israel Defense Forces “executed a number of extraordinary methods to mitigate civilian risks.” It concluded: “It is our assessment as military professionals that IDF operations in Gaza exercised considerable restraint and exceeded the requirements of [international law].”

Another group of experts that included the former chiefs of staff of the German, Spanish and Italian militaries found: “Each of our own armies is of course committed to protecting civilian life during combat. But none of us is aware of an army that takes such extensive measures as did the IDF last summer to protect the lives of the civilian populations.”

And the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey, concluded that “Israel went to extraordinary lengths to limit civilian casualties” during the Gaza war, and sent American officers to Israel to learn from its example.

Condemnations of Israel that are nonsense are the U.N.’s specialty, and the forthcoming report is unlikely to be any different. The experts who have debunked these condemnations are military professionals who deal in facts, not in agendas. When it comes to Israel, the U.N. carries on imitating Alice-in-Wonderland, devoid of any credibility and displaying no sign of caring.