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The report of the international commission of inquiry, established by the United Nations Human Rights Council to allocate responsibility for last summer’s Gaza war, exposed moral obtuseness masquerading as moral equivalency. The commission was authorized “to investigate all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip.” The only problem with that sweeping mandate was that the Gaza war, as its name rather clearly indicates, was not fought in the West Bank or Jerusalem. But the commission was palpably eager for its reach to exceed its grasp.

The original chairman of the commission was Canadian law professor William Schabas (family name Sabbath). But he soon resigned following the revelation that he had previously provided paid legal advice to the PLO. Israeli Ambassador to the UN Ron Prosor observed that “Forming an investigatory committee headed by Schabas is like inviting ISIS to organize religious tolerance week at the UN.” Astonishingly, even for a UN investigating commission, it assumed that despite the 2005 disengagement from Gaza, when Israel abandoned its settlements, evacuated residents and withdrew its military forces, “Gaza continues to be occupied by Israel.” By that illogic, the UN could decide that Germany continues to be occupied by the Allied nations and the United States by England.

The commission acknowledged, in passing, “the increasing number of rocket attacks on Israel” as the cause of war. But commissioners were “assured” (by Gaza authorities) that “Palestinian armed groups did not target civilians.” (Yet thousands of Israelis fled their homes and 4-year-old Daniel Tragerman was killed in his border kibbutz home by shrapnel from a rocket fired from an UNRWA-run school.) The notorious cross-border tunnels were only used “to conduct attacks directed at IDF positions in Israel in the vicinity of the Green Line, which are legitimate military targets.” Not surprisingly, the commission found “serious violations of international humanitarian law” that “may amount to war crimes” by both Israel and Palestinians. Surely one expects no better from the United Nations, which seems ever ready to justify the Palestinian terrorism for which it subsequently holds Israel responsible.

Enter The New York Times, whose editorial board contributed its own predictable judgment of moral equivalence. Noting that 4881 rockets and 1753 mortars were fired from Gaza, largely from civilian neighborhoods, it wondered “why residential buildings were considered legitimate targets” by Israel. Like UN commissioners, the editors called upon “leaders on both sides” to “hold violators of international law accountable for their conduct.”

First to incur blame was Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had dismissed the report as “biased.” Refusing to cooperate with the commission, the Israeli government had issued its own report two weeks earlier asserting that it had not violated international law.

The editorial approvingly cited Breaking the Silence, identified merely as an “Israeli advocacy group,” for its criticism of the Israeli government. But Breaking the Silence is a left-wing organization with a blatant political agenda: “to expose the Israeli public to the reality of everyday life in the Occupied Territories” and the “deterioration of moral standards” that accompanies it. Neither the Times nor Breaking the Silence cared to notice that the only occupier of Gaza is Hamas. Nor did the editorial mention the State Department spokesman who declared, two days earlier, that the UN Human Rights Commission had a “clear bias” against Israel.

Applying its familiar double standard to Israel, the editorial concluded: “It is unrealistic to expect Hamas, which the United States and other countries consider a terrorist group, to comply with international law or police itself. But Israel has a duty, and should have the desire, to adjust its military policies to avoid civilian casualties and hold those who failed to do so accountable.”

In other words, give a pass to Hamas, which has started each war with Israel since 2008, and blame Israel. Or, to rephrase the Times motto: “All the news that fits we print.”