**AJC Denounces UN Human Rights Council Report on Israel-Hamas Conflict**

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AJC denounces the latest UN Human Rights Council report singling out Israel for condemnation. The report was prepared by an “independent international commission of inquiry” established by the Council to investigate the violence that took place along the Gaza-Israel border from March 30 to December 31, 2018.

“True to form, the commission of inquiry has exhibited a myopic view of the situation in Gaza, largely ignoring Hamas’s repeated provocations and attacks against Israel and almost exclusively blaming Israel,” said Daniel Elbaum, AJC Chief Advocacy Officer. “The commission deliberately ignores the facts that Israel totally withdrew from the Gaza Strip (and not only from Israeli settlements) in 2005, transferred it to the Palestinian Authority, and Hamas has ruled the coastal enclave since 2007, persistently threatening and attacking neighboring Israel. Israel has shown more restraint than nearly any other nation would demonstrate against an organized attempt to breach its border and endanger its civilians.”

Since its founding in 2006, the Human Rights Council, based in Geneva, has repeatedly singled out and censured Israel. Most egregious is the Council’s agenda Item 7, which subjects Israel to permanent indictment. Israel is the only country that is subject to a separate, stand-alone agenda item, while human rights violations in every other nation are considered collectively under agenda item 4. The new report of the Council’s commission of inquiry is consistent with this pattern of bias.

Key facts ignored or distorted by the commission of inquiry include:

-- Since the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, Hamas and other terrorist organizations have launched more than 10,000 rockets and mortars at Israeli towns and villages. Hamas also has built dozens of tunnels designed to enable its death squads to penetrate Israel and kill Israeli civilians.

-- In a change of tactics – but not of goal, which remains the destruction of Israel – Hamas has used civilians as tools to score propaganda points against the Jewish state. This tactic was the essence of the so-called “March of Return,” orchestrated by Hamas last year.

-- The violence on the Gaza border was the deliberate choice of Hamas, which urged Palestinians, many of them only teenagers, to rush and attempt to break through the security barrier, to hurl Molotov cocktails or other objects, and to launch flaming kites at Israeli positions, in the cynical knowledge that these threats to Israel would be repelled, blood would be shed, and accusing fingers would be pointed not at those who provoked these assaults but at those who defended against them.

-- The overarching theme of the “March of Return” was the demand that Palestinians who fled their homes in 1948, and their descendants, be allowed to return to lands that became Israel. This so-called “right of return” is unacceptable since a large influx of Palestinians would mean the end of the Jewish state.

-- The solution for the Palestinian refugees lies in their settlement in the Arab lands where they currently live, or their repatriation to a future Palestinian state, which can only be established as a result of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

-- The commission of inquiry cites UN General Assembly resolution 194, which purportedly provides for the return of Palestinian refugees, but conveniently ignores the fact that at the time of its adoption in December 1948 the resolution was totally rejected by the Palestinian leadership and all Arab states. Nor does the commission recognize that resolution 194 was overtaken by the events of the past 70 years.

-- Because a state of armed conflict exists between Israel and the Hamas regime controlling Gaza, Israel has the right under international law to protect its citizens, including by a blockade in international waters. Yet every day hundreds of trucks cross the Israel-Gaza border, carrying food and other goods from Israel to the Gaza Strip. Israel has repeatedly offered an arrangement whereby any humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip can be delivered to the ports of Ashdod and Haifa, and then transferred to the Gaza Strip through the existing overland crossings.

Regrettably, the commission of inquiry chose to ignore realities, preferring instead to follow the all-too-familiar pattern of disproportionately condemning Israel. In so doing, the commission has done a disservice to those who truly seek peace. A comprehensive, sustainable Israeli-Palestinian peace can only be achieved through direct, bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian leadership. Yet, the Palestinian leadership, led by Mahmoud Abbas, walked away from the table five years ago, and refuses to return.