UN Fails to Learn Lessons of Holocaust. It Focuses on Showmanship

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Analogizing Palestinians to the Jewish victims of the Nazis:  that’s how the UN is marking this week’s “International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.”   The epicenter of modern antisemitism on a global scale is not somewhere over there, but in the middle of Turtle Bay.

For public tour groups, and their busloads of impressionable American students from around the country, the UN ‘s permanent “Palestine” exhibit has now been arranged to be within a few feet of the UN’s permanent Holocaust exhibit.

This week’s activities follow suit.

On January 25, 2016, a temporary exhibit called “Holocaust by Bullets” was opened in the UN visitors’ lobby.  The painstaking research of the French organization Yahad-In Unum substantiates how two million Jews were shot to death in the presence of normal folks all over Europe.

But “Holocaust by Bullets” follows the UN’s December exhibition, which is titled “Palestinian Children:  Overcoming Tragedies with Hope, Dreams, Resilience and Dignity.”  That month-long display in the visitors’ lobby consisted of scenes of Palestinian children suffering from “devastating” wanton, unprovoked Israeli “operations.”

Father Patrick Desbois opened Yahad-In Unum’s exhibit by explaining that his team locates the bodies of Nazi victims and then honors the dead.  He is driven to ensure that Europe does not bury “all its values” by building its future on unacknowledged and unvalued human beings in mass graves.

Palestinian UN representative Riyad Mansour opened December’s exhibit with a different set of values – incitement for Palestinian children to kill more Jews.  As Mansour explained: “we are so proud that in this popular uprising, the backbone of this uprising are the youth of Palestine.”

On January 26, 2016, the Security Council held a debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.”  The hate speech against the Jewish state flowed uninterrupted for seven hours and was broadcast around the world.  Israel was said to be guilty of “crimes against humanity,” “execution” of children, “apartheid,” “racism,” “brutality,” “terrorism,” “war crimes,” “assassinations,” “torture of children,” and “Judaization” – the allegedly vile presence of Jews on Arab-claimed territory.

So picture this.  Upstairs, Council members listened unperturbed to repeated rants about “Judaization.”  Downstairs, the Holocaust exhibit recounted how ordinary people did nothing while their neighbors were rounded up with cries of “Juden, Juden, Juden.”

In the evening of January 26, the German UN mission opened a second exhibit in the visitors’ lobby called “Life after Survival.”  Among other things, the German exhibit argues that Holocaust survivors had to be rehabilitated from their “hatred towards their former tormentors and all Germans” because “such hatred would work to their own disadvantage.”

By contrast, a few hours previously at the Security Council session on Israel, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was commiserating with the haters – at least those whose targets are Jews.  The Secretary-General told the Council:  “… oppressed peoples have demonstrated throughout the ages, it is human nature to react to occupation, which often serves as a potent incubator of hate and [extremism](http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/sgspeeches/statments_full.asp?statID=2904#.Vqf8yFLm5Gg).”

How can one square what will clearly be interpreted as a call to arms with the Secretary-General’s repeated statement that “nothing can justify terrorism.  No cause or grievance can be accepted as an excuse to commit a terrorist [act](http://www.un.org/sg/STATEMENTS/index.asp?nid=6664)”?

The answer is that at the UN, even the recent stabbing death of an Israeli mother of six – in front of her children – is not considered a terrorist act.  Recent word games about “violent extremism” do not help.  For as Ban Ki-moon reported to the General Assembly just weeks ago, it’s all relative: “definitions of “terrorism” and “violent extremism” are the prerogative of Member [States](http://www.humanrightsvoices.org/assets/attachments/documents/12.24.2015.plan.action.prevent.extremism.pdf)…”

At the Security Council meeting, Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon railed against the obvious discrimination.  He pointed out that in the past four months “Israelis have been stabbed in their homes, shot at in the streets, and run over by terrorists using cars as weapons” with thirty deaths and hundreds injured. During this same period of time, the Israeli Ambassador continued, “the Council adopted 12 resolutions against terrorism and condemned terrorist attacks in France, Sinai, Lebanon, Mali, Tunisia, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Somalia and Sudan.”  But not in Israel.  When it came to Israelis, there was “no condemnation, no expression of solidarity, not even a statement of [concern](http://embassies.gov.il/un/statements/security_council/Pages/Danon-Security-Counil.aspx).”

This is the context in which, for a brief two hours on January 27, 2016, the General Assembly marks the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

And on exactly the same day, the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will kick off its UN-based year-long program to justify the murder of Jews in the here and [now](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/AC.183/2016/L.1).

The UN has learned the lessons of Holocaust remembrance showmanship, not the lessons of the Holocaust.  So here’s lesson number one:  embracing elderly survivors while imperiling their progeny is a dangerous deceit.