Anti-Israel bias continues unabated in UN agencies

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When Francesca Albanese was nominated to be the next United Nations [special rapporteur](https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-palestine/francesca-albanese-special-rapporteur-situation-human-rights-palestinian-territory-occupied-1967) for the Palestinian territories last February, critics [feared](https://unwatch.org/un-nominates-israel-apartheid-activist-to-be-palestine-rapporteur/) her well-established anti-Israel bias would taint her work.

“Francesca Albanese completely fails even the minimal standards of impartiality and objectivity,” said UN Watch Executive Director Hillel Neuer, “because this is an individual who has quite simply devoted her life to militant advocacy against Israel, as even a fleeting glance at her social media and public statements reveals. She’s the very opposite of impartial.”

Albanese’s actions since then have only strengthened this argument.

The rapporteur is supposed to be an independent expert appointed by the U.N. Human Rights Council tasked with investigating human rights conditions in Palestinian areas. According to U.N. provisions, special rapporteurs are expected to demonstrate “impartiality.” The [selection procedure](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/ALBANESE_Francesca_form.pdf) dictates that there should not be “any reason, currently or in the past, that could call into question the candidate’s moral authority and credibility.”

This is not the case with Albanese.

Israeli officials protested her appointment last spring, [saying](https://embassies.gov.il/UnGeneva/NewsAndEvents/MediaStatements/Pages/20220401-Press-Release-HRC-Appointment-of-a-New-Biased-Special-Rapporteur.aspx) they don’t “expect any fair, objective [or] professional treatment from an activist who promotes outrageous libels, compares the Holocaust to the Nakba, and advocates for the de facto destruction of the Nation State of the Jewish People.”

In Dec. 2022, Albanese downplayed Palestinian terrorist activities when she [referred](https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1606093442437636096?cxt=HHwWgICjib_e_sksAAAA) to Abu Hamid, a founder of Fatah’s Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades who murdered seven Israelis, as a “Palestinian refugee from Al-Amar Camp, West Bank” who “was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2002, for alleged involvement in attacks against ISR forces during the 2nd Intifada.”

In late November, Albanese spoke at a conference held by a Hamas-affiliated think tank, along with operatives of the two most notorious Palestinian terrorist organizations, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, as well as other extremist Palestinian organizations.

The [conference](https://coir.ps/en/international-conference-in-gaza-confirms-that-gaza-blockade-is-war-crime/), “16 Years of Siege on Gaza: Impacts and Prospects,” was organized by the Council on International Relations Palestine (CIR Palestine).

CIR Palestine promotes Hamas views, including the “full liberation of Palestine,” meaning Israel’s destruction. In a 2021 [communique](https://coir.ps/en/cir-the-palestinian-people-will-continue-their-struggle-until-they-achieve-their-rights-and-end-the-occupation/), CIR Palestine announced that “the Palestinian people will continue their struggle and resistance to the occupation until liberating the entire Palestinian land and achieving their rights undiminished, using all means available and legitimate.” This wording is similar to the Hamas [covenant](https://www.gov.il/en/departments/general/the-covenant-of-the-hamas-main-points): “Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it.”

The conference featured Hamas spokesman Abdul Latif Al-Qanu and Hamas members Basem Naim, Ghazi Hamad and Isam Al-Da’alis, as well as Palestinian Islamic Jihad members Ahmad Al-Mudallal and Khader Habib. Other participants included Maher Mezher, a member of the Central Committee of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), who has [called](https://www.memri.org/tv/pflp-central-committee-member-maher-mezher-west-bank-rise-up-third-intifada-martyrdom-knives-molotov-guns) for terrorist attacks against Israelis in Judea and Samaria.

In her address, Albanese [told](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzzlc33CIzs) Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad members that “resistance against Israel is your right.”

The U.N. special rapporteur’s worrying views are not an isolated incident, but part of a continuum of anti-Israel bias in that office. In 2008, the then-rapporteur [described](https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0%2C7340%2CL-3511695%2C00.html) Palestinian terrorism as an “inevitable consequence” of Israel’s actions, while his successor [even blamed](https://unwatch.org/uk-urged-expel-richard-falk-condemned-3-times-antisemitism/) the 2013 Boston marathon bombing on “the American global domination project” and “Tel Aviv.”

The issue at hand is whether this institutional framework is used to promote unfounded claims and opposition to Israel in general. Indeed, Israel is the only country for which a permanent investigator has been assigned by U.N. authorities. No investigator has ever been assigned for human rights violations in Turkish-occupied Cyprus or the Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine.

It seems that Israeli concerns about Albanese were well founded. An overview of Albanese’s [social media activities](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-palestinian-rights-officials-social-media-history-reveals-antisemitic-comments/) and public appearances by *The Times of Israel* demonstrated a strong anti-Israel bias, disregard for Israeli security concerns and alignment with views and propaganda tropes espoused by Islamist terrorist groups.

In a recently submitted [report](https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/A.77.356_210922.pdf#page=4) to the U.N. General Assembly, Albanese speaks of “gross violations of international law, including racial segregation and subjugation by the occupying Power, Israel.” She [reiterates](https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/A.77.356_210922.pdf#page=5) the oft-repeated but unfounded claim that Israel—the only democracy in the Middle East—is an apartheid state that discriminates against Palestinians, stating, “Systemic and widespread discriminatory Israeli policies and practices against the Palestinians amount to the crime of apartheid under international law.”

She [describes](https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/A.77.356_210922.pdf#page=6) Israel’s creation in the context of “settlements of foreign people implanted among the indigenous population” and of “a native Palestinian Arab population” opposed to “largely European Jewish settlers and refugees from Europe,” to promote the notion that Israel is a colonialist state founded on historically Arab land.

In an [interview](https://altreconomia.it/francesca-albanese-il-mio-impegno-per-i-diritti-in-palestina/) last June with an Italian magazine, Albanese excused Palestinian terrorism, saying, “[Israeli] apartheid is a form of corruption, and violence always breeds violence.” More worryingly, she has also [referred](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-palestinian-rights-officials-social-media-history-reveals-antisemitic-comments/) to a “Jewish lobby” that supposedly dominates U.S. foreign policy, thus promoting well-known antisemitic tropes.

In an [open letter](https://static.timesofisrael.com/www/uploads/2022/12/Screen-Shot-2022-12-07-at-12.28.55-PM.jpg) posted during the 2014 conflict between Israel and Hamas, Albanese lashed out at the United States and the European Union for supporting Israel’s right to defend itself against unceasing Hamas missile, rocket and mortar fire on civilians.

“America and Europe, one of them subjugated by the Jewish lobby, and the other by the sense of guilt about the Holocaust, remain on the sidelines and continue to condemn the oppressed—the Palestinians—who defend themselves with the only means they have, instead of making Israel face its international law responsibilities,” Albanese [wrote](https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-palestinian-rights-officials-social-media-history-reveals-antisemitic-comments/).

In response to all these revelations, Michèle Taylor, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Human Rights Council, [wrote](https://twitter.com/USAmbHRC/status/1603091256082563075) that the Biden administration was “appalled by [the] recently uncovered antisemitic remarks. … References to the ‘Jewish Lobby’ are an age-old trope; this is outrageous, inappropriate, corrosive, & degrades the value of the UN.”

Due to Albanese’s remarks, Israeli authorities still have [not allowed](https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1608499840836673537?cxt=HHwWgoC9paiFxdIsAAAA) her to enter the country or the Palestinian-controlled territories.

The Israeli mission to the U.N. in Geneva issued a [statement](https://embassies.gov.il/UnGeneva/NewsAndEvents/MediaStatements/Pages/20221412-Statement-Remarks-Made-By-UN-Special-Rapporteur-Francesca-Albanese.aspx) calling on the U.N. to “take concrete action in addressing systemic antisemitism within the United Nations Human Rights Council and its mechanisms.”

The U.N. has remained silent on this issue.

Albanese is just the latest case in a pattern of inherent anti-Israeli bias within U.N. agencies. Previous U.N. special rapporteurs have described the situation in Palestine as “apartheid” in reports that were [well-received](https://coir.ps/en/cir-welcomes-unhrc-report-accusing-israel-of-apartheid/) by Islamist-affiliated Palestinian think tanks.

Other U.N. agencies, such as the Human Rights Council, have constantly demonstrated [bias](https://embassies.gov.il/UnGeneva/NewsAndEvents/MediaStatements/Pages/20220830-Statement-On-The-Comments-Made-By-Michelle-Bachelet.aspx) against Israel. The previous U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, issued 14 comments against Israel during her tenure, compared to only six against China.

She did not react when a member of her office [spoke](https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-israel-geneva-race-and-ethnicity-92d888b43d685e65d82952980a032e6f) of a “Jewish lobby” and went so far as to [question](https://geneva.usmission.gov/2022/07/28/statement-on-antisemitic-remarks-by-a-commissioner-of-the-israel-coi/) Israel’s right to be a U.N. member.

The credibility of an agency like the U.N. Human Rights Council suffers when it focuses on Israel while ignoring far more pernicious, systematic human rights abuses in countries like China, Cuba and Venezuela. Since 2015, the council has approved 99 resolutions [condemning Israel](https://unwatch.org/database/country/israel/), more than twice the number of times it condemned [Syria](https://unwatch.org/database/country/syria/) and seven times more than it condemned [Iran](https://unwatch.org/database/country/iran/). Tellingly, the Council has issued no resolutions against [China](https://unwatch.org/database/country/china/) or [Turkey](https://unwatch.org/database/country/turkey/).

It seems that U.N. agencies continue their anti-Israel bias unhindered, presenting a distorted view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that indirectly legitimizes terrorism and continuing violence against Israel and its citizens.