Israel snubs 'shameful' UN inquiry on alleged war crimes

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<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-696854>

Israel will not cooperate with the [UN Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry](https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/navi-pillay-to-head-unhrcs-permanent-war-crimes-probe-against-israel-674632) (COI) into alleged Israeli war crimes, Ambassador to International Institutions in Geneva Meirav Eilon Shahar wrote on Thursday.

"There is simply no reason to believe that Israel will receive reasonable, equitable and non-discriminatory treatment from the Council or from this [COI] that you were appointed to lead," Eilon Shahar wrote to Navi Pillay, its commissioner.

The COI was established in the aftermath of the 11-day Gaza war and internecine rioting in May. It is unprecedented in its open-ended mandate – it can look into any alleged Israeli human rights violations in sovereign Israel, the West Bank and Gaza – and time frame, which could make it permanent. The UN General Assembly approved a budget of of $4.1 million annually for the commission.

It is led by [Pillay](https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/article-696436), the former UN high commissioner for human rights who appointed four fact-finding missions targeting Israel, more than any country, including the Goldstone Report, and convened the anti-Israel Durban II conference, which platformed then-president of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Holocaust denial, among other anti-Israel moves. She has called Israel an apartheid state and advocated for the BDS movement.

"Israel engages on a frequent and regular basis with a wide range of international human rights bodies as part of its commitment to the rule of law and the advancement of human rights," Eilon Shahar stated. "At the same time, we expect such bodies to act in good faith, without bias and not in the service of a pre-determined political agenda."

"Regrettably, none of this can be expected from the COI," she stated.

The COI is clearly "designed to serve as a political tool, rather than an impartial investigative body," and "is sure to be yet another sorry chapter in the efforts to demonize the State of Israel, distorting the factual and legal record and hijacking the values, language and mechanisms of human rights in order to advance a partisan campaign," the letter reads.

Eilon Shahar noted that the COI is borne out of a pattern of discriminatory behavior by the UNHRC, which has approved nine investigations of Israel, which almost a third of all such bodies established by the council. Israel is also the only country with a permanent agenda item and special rapporteur, and is subject to more UNHRC condemnations than all other countries combined.

Though the COI was established in response to the conflict between Israel and Hamas, its mandate does not mention any terrorism by Hamas, which launched 4300 rockets into Israeli civilian populations in May.

The COI's "open-ended mandate...is effectively designed to investigate - in perpetuity - accusations against Israel since its inception," the ambassador said. "By mandating the investigation of so-called 'underlying root cause,' the Council has cynically set the stage for the COI to...manipulate reality and selectively target Israel in an effort to delegitimize and even criminalize its very existence."

Eilon Shahar pointed out that not only Pillay, but the other two members of the COI have publicly expressed hostile positions against Israel, despite the UN's rule to "ensure that the background candidates, prior public statements or political or other affiliations do not affect their independence or impartiality or create perceptions of bias."

The ambassador argues that the members of the commission were "appointed because they were tainted with bias and based on their history of activism and hostile accusations against Israel, so as to guarantee a politically motivated outcome that is tailored in advance."

As such, Eilon Shahar said, over half of the UNHRC's members did not support the COI's establishment.

The commission "will only contribute to the polarization between Israelis and Palestinians, distancing them further from...genuine peace and reconciliation," she wrote.