Katz decries UN’s ‘silence’ on Hamas attacks at meeting on Oct. 7 sexual violence

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Foreign Minister Israel Katz used a Monday emergency UN Security Council meeting on sexual violence perpetrated on and after October 7 to urge the body to formally recognize Hamas as a terror organization.

‘Hamas must be declared a terrorist organization and face the heaviest sanctions possible,’ Katz said after traveling from Israel to attend the session on a report published earlier this month by the UN’s special envoy on sexual violence.

The report compiled by Pramila Patten stated that there was ‘clear and convincing information’ to indicate that hostages held captive in Gaza were subjected to ‘sexual violence including rape, sexualized torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.’

It also said that there were ‘reasonable grounds’ to believe that Hamas terrorists perpetrated rape and gang rape against victims in at least three main locations during their October 7 attack on Israel, during which they murdered some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and kidnapped 253.

‘We are asking you to condemn the sexual violence crimes these barbarians committed in the name of the Muslim religion,’ Katz told the Security Council, while also urging the body ‘to put as much pressure as possible on the Hamas organization to release immediately and unconditionally all the kidnapped hostages.’

‘Please try your utmost to stop this living hell on earth,’ Katz implored, adding that the countries on the council have the opportunity to save the hostages still held by Hamas.

Katz also called out the UN for being ‘silent on Hamas’s actions.’

The Israeli foreign minister, who spoke last at Monday’s session, thanked the US, France and the UK for requesting the emergency hearing.

**Patten praises support from Guterres**

Patten was first to address the council, reviewing the findings of her report. She flatly rejected claims by Katz and other Israeli officials that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres sought to suppress her work.

‘On the contrary, I received his full support, politically, logistically, and financially; and he also gave clear instructions for the public release of my report, and its immediate transmission to the Security Council,’ said Patten.

She urged members to put themselves in the shoes of the Israeli hostages and their families.

‘156 days have passed since the abduction of their loved ones, with no less than 16 women among the hostages,’ Pramila Patten said. Israel believes 19 women remain hostage.

‘On the one hand, nothing can justify the deliberate violence perpetrated by Hamas and other armed groups on the seventh of October against Israel,’ Patten continued. ‘On the other hand, nothing can also justify the collective punishment of the people in Gaza, which has left tens of thousands of Palestinians killed and injured.’

‘I must also state that I’m horrified by the injustice of women and children being killed in Gaza by countless bombs and gunfire, and I’m also outraged by the level of deaths and pain of entire families, often generations wiped out,’ she added.

**Russia blasts UN envoy, Israel**

Russia attempted to cast doubt on Patten’s report, with Deputy Ambassador Maria Zabolotskaya saying, ‘We are being presented with only partial information from the context of a specific mandate and being asked to respond to it.’

The Russian envoy also sought to delegitimize the UN envoy who compiled the report over her alleged history of ‘using fakes’ — a reference to Patten’s work exposing war crimes perpetrated by Russia against Ukraine.

‘At the same time, the information in the report on rapes as well as the mission’s conclusions as to the likelihood of further sexual violence against the hostages is shocking. Sexual violence against Israelis has no justification. Those guilty must be held accountable,’ Zabolotskaya said.

She blasted Israel over sections of the report highlighting sexual violence perpetrated by Israeli security forces against Palestinians in the form of threats of rape, strip searches, and beating of the genitals, which the UN and human rights groups say have been systematic for decades. Israel has said its troops operate according to international law and that it is prepared to investigate allegations of misconduct.

**US: False equivalency**

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the UN report ‘confirms what we have known for months: On October 7th, Hamas carried out horrific acts of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape and gang rape.’

‘And yet, so many people around the world — including members of this very council — have been silent in the face of these atrocities,’ Thomas-Greenfield lamented. ‘Worse — some openly viewed these atrocities with suspicion and skepticism. It is unforgivable, and it is a gross affront to all survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.’

While just about all members have individually condemned the sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas-led terrorists, some have blocked the Security Council from issuing a joint statement condemning the phenomenon. The US envoy urged the body to take this step.

Thomas-Greenfield also quoted the report’s findings that ‘‘the detention of Palestinian men and women has been compounded by alleged instances of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, including increased instances of various forms of sexual violence.’’

‘All parties to this conflict must uphold their obligations under international law with regard to the treatment of detained individuals, and we urge and expect Israel to end these abuses,’ the US envoy added.

However, she cautioned members against ‘drawing a false equivalency between these actions and hostage-taking by a foreign terrorist organization. These two things are not the same.’

Thomas-Greenfield called for the implementation of a six-week ceasefire currently on the table, adding that Israel has accepted the framework and that it is up to Hamas to do the same.

**Confrontation with PA envoy**

Speaking prior to Katz, Palestinian Authority Ambassador to the UN Riyad Mansour repeatedly castigated Israel throughout his speech but did condemn sexual violence against civilians in general.

‘We once again reiterate that nothing can justify violence targeting civilians, including sexual violence — one of the most abhorrent forms of violence,’ Mansour said.

He bemoaned the fact that the UN has never held a similar session on allegations of Israeli sexual violence against Palestinians.

After the session, Mansour was confronted by Ali Ziyadne, whose brother Yousef and nephew Hamza are among the hostages in Gaza.

During the filmed exchange, Ziyadne asked Mansour why Hamas had kidnapped his relatives and why the terror group agreed to return Thai nationals while leaving fellow Muslims in the tunnels of Gaza for over five months.

‘Remember your Muslim brothers and sisters who died in Gaza — 30,000 of them along with 75,000 who have been wounded along with the destruction caused [by Israel],’ Mansour said in response, before reiterating a general condemnation of harming civilians. He also told Ziyadne he was being taken advantage of by Israeli authorities who had brought him to the session along with other relatives of the hostages.

The Security Council has called for the immediate, unconditional release of all hostages in resolutions adopted in November and December. It is currently considering a US-drafted resolution that includes a condemnation of the October 7 attack by Hamas ‘as well as its taking and killing of hostages, murder of civilians, and sexual violence including rape.’