Critics slam UN for pointing fingers at Israel in new report while not also condemning Hamas' use of human shields

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It has almost been one year since the start of the Gaza-Israel border uprisings that left 189 Palestinians dead in a monthslong rash of violent demonstrations demanding an end to the blockade on Gaza and the right to return to their lands. To mark the March 30 anniversary, a three-person U.N. war crimes investigation team, as part of a Commission of Inquiry (COI), has [released a report](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session40/Documents/A_HRC_40_74_CRP2.18March.pdf) indicating that Israeli security forces committed possible war crimes and crimes against humanity, and this week called on Israelis to prevent snipers from using lethal force against demonstrators.

However, Israel supporters and U.N. critics have this week blasted the leading human rights body and the report for failing to illuminate alleged Hamas war crimes – in particular, the widespread and illegal use of human shields.

“Since the 2014 Gaza conflict, Hamas (has) used civilians as human shields for its own fighters. Similar tactics were successfully adopted by Hezbollah against Israel in their 2006 conflict,” Lt. Gen Richard Natonski, a retired U.S. Marine and member of the Hybrid Warfare Task Force at the Jewish Institute for National Security America (JINSA), told Fox News. “The use of human shields in combat is contrary to Western thinking and the law of armed conflict. It’s hard to imagine how this wasn't mentioned in the U.N. report, except for perhaps a certain bias by the authors of the report against Israel."

JINSA has issued its own report, “Defending the Fence: Legal and Operational Challenges in Hamas-Israel Clashes,” to counter the U.N. report's narrative.

“Hamas systematically violates international law by purposely using Gazan Palestinian civilians as human shields for attacking Israel, provoking Israeli actions that would lead to civilian casualties, and attacking Israeli civilians indiscriminately,” the JINSA report stated, underscoring that the COI’s report both “undermines the international legal regime it seeks to enhance and sets a precedent encouraging Hamas and similar armed groups to double down on these illegal tactics.”

Some Israel supporters have accused the U.N. Human Rights Council of being complicit in Hamas’ “terror campaign” against Israel.

“The U.N. report validates the illegal tactics used by Hamas against Israel, and sets a precedent encouraging not only Hamas, but similar groups like Hezbollah, to continue placing civilians in harm’s way,” Natonski said.

Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have been quick to condemn the U.N. council and its report as anti-Semitic and partisan. Israel went on to boycott its debate on Monday as hundreds of Israel proponents – including American officials – massed outside the U.N. building in Geneva.

The 252-page U.N. report makes brief mention of Israeli claims that Hamas, a designated terrorist organization in the United States, was using human shields and that journalists were acting as shields to protect Hamas operatives.

“Terrorists’ use of human shields is a remarkably effective tactic against countries like the U.S. and Israel, whose ethical and military codes require avoiding civilian casualties. Terrorists hide among civilians to shelter themselves from lawful attacks or deliberately cause civilian casualties,” said Mark Dubowitz, the CEO of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD). “Terrorists and their sponsoring regimes must be held accountable for their brutal practice of using civilians as human shields. The U.N. Commission’s unwillingness to hold Hamas accountable for its war crimes only costs more civilian lives.”

Texas Sen. Ted Cruz joined the chorus of condemnation by taking aim at the U.N. report, calling the “useful idiots” at the United Nations “absurd and dishonest.”

“Hamas and Hezbollah use human shields as a deliberate tactic,” the veteran GOP lawmaker said. “They use innocent Palestinian civilians, to put them in harm’s way, because they intend to exploit those human shields for when they are injured or killed when Israel defends itself.”

The Trump administration [pulled out](https://www.foxnews.com/politics/us-withdraws-from-un-human-rights-council-as-haley-decries-cesspool-of-political-bias) of the U.N Human Rights Council last year, specifying an inherent anti-Israel prejudice at the organization as a key reason for withdrawal.

Despite the criticism, the COI is remaining firm in their findings, which allege that 183 or the 189 who were killed in the skirmishes – which also included 32 children – were killed by live fire, and that such live ammunition also wounded more than 6,000 Palestinians.

“The most important thing for the government of Israel is to review the rules of engagement immediately and to ensure that the rules of engagement are according to accepted international standards,” Santiago Canton, the commission’s chairman, told the Human Rights Council this week.

The commission has furthermore submitted a clandestine file to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) naming specific individuals responsible for alleged violations and advocating that the dossier be passed to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

A new round of protests is expected to commemorate the first anniversary of the uprisings at the end of the month.