Israel Accused of ‘Apartheid’ at the UN Human Rights Council

March 21, 2017

By [Patrick Goodenough](http://www.cnsnews.com/author/patrick-goodenough)

CNS News

<http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/patrick-goodenough/israel-accused-apartheid-un-human-rights-council>

As the U.N. Human Rights Council on Monday held its once-a-session condemnation of Israel, the word “apartheid” featured frequently, as members drew attention to the recent verdict of an obscure U.N. body [declaring Israel “guilty of the crime of apartheid](http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/patrick-goodenough/6th-anniversary-syria-civil-war-un-body-releases-report-accusing).”

Two representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) accredited to take part in HRC sessions hit back against the member governments, challenging Arab states and the Palestinians on their treatment of Jews; and challenging the HRC itself over singling out one country, Israel, for censure.

U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley last week described as “anti-Israel propaganda” the controversial “apartheid” report championed by the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and urged U.N. secretary-general Antonio Guterres to disown it.

After Guterres ordered ESCWA to remove the report from its website – on the grounds he was not consulted beforehand – ESCWA’s chief resigned in protest. Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas quickly announced he would award her with the premier Palestinian medal.

At Monday’s HRC meeting in Geneva, a number of delegates used their interventions to accuse Israel of “apartheid,” and some bemoaned the removal of the ESCWA report.

Many also complained about the fact that the United States and some European delegations boycotted Monday’s meeting to protest the sole permanent item on the HRC agenda that targets a specific country – Israel.

The existence of “agenda item seven” means that Israel is condemned at every regular session of the HRC. The current month-long session will end this week with Israel the target of five out of a total of 12 country-specific resolutions. Situations in Syria, Iran, Libya, North Korea, South Sudan, Burma and Sri Lanka will account for one resolution each.

State Department spokesman Mark Toner said Monday the U.S. will vote against all of the Israel resolutions, and urged other countries to do the same.

ESCWA, a body comprising 18 Arab countries, said last week that its report was the first by a U.N. body to determine that Israel is an “apartheid” regime.

The provocative word, which refers to the policy of statutory segregation instituted by the Afrikaner Nationalist government in South Africa in 1948, has been hurled at Israel before at the HRC, but the ESCWA report evidently emboldened more delegates to use it.

Among those accusing Israel of apartheid on Monday were the delegates of the “state of Palestine,” Nicaragua, Qatar (three times), Bahrain (twice) and Pakistan; and representatives of four NGOs – the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, American Association of Jurists, Union of Arab Jurists (which also accused Israel of genocide), and World Muslim Congress.

Syria’s Assad regime also referenced the ESCWA report, saying it had exposed “the true face of Israel.” (ESCWA released its report in Beirut last week on the sixth anniversary of the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, which the U.N. has described as the most devastating humanitarian crisis of our time.)

‘Where is the apartheid?’

The pushback came from two NGOs that are among the HRC’s harshest critics – U.N. Watch and the Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust.

“In so-called apartheid Israel,” Anne Bayefsky of the Touro Institute told the council, “Arabs are Supreme Court judges, cabinet ministers and ambassadors. Arab parties are the third-largest bloc in Israel’s parliament, and 1.8 million Arabs – a fifth of the population – have more democratic rights and freedoms than in any Arab state.”

“Apartheid Palestine on the other hand – promises Palestinian leader Abbas – will be *judenrein* [Jew-free],” she added.

“Apartheid at the U.N. Human Rights Council is already well entrenched,” Bayefsky charged, pointing to permanent agenda item seven and to the lopsided number of resolutions targeting the Jewish state.

Bayefsky said the situation left the U.S. with “just one anti-apartheid and pro-human rights choice” – to quit the HRC.

(The Trump administration has informed the U.N. that its participation at the council [is under review](http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/patrick-goodenough/trump-administration-puts-un-human-rights-council-notice-obsession).)

U.N. Watch executive director Hillel Neuer called the accusation of apartheid leveled against Israel “absurd.”

“Israel’s 1.5 million Arabs, whatever challenges they face, enjoy full rights to vote and to be elected in the Knesset. They work as doctors and lawyers,” he told the gathering. “They serve on the Supreme Court.”

Then he challenged Arab states in the chamber about their former Jewish communities.

“How many Jews live in your countries? How many Jews lived in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco. Oman, Palestine? Once upon a time the Middle East was full of Jews. Algeria had 140,000 Jews. Algeria where are your Jews? Egypt used to have 75,000 Jews. Where are your Jews?”

Neuer asked where the “real apartheid” was. He noted that Israel is excluded from the U.N.’s Middle East commission, ESCWA, because its Arab members decades ago refused to allow it to join.

“Why are we meeting today on an agenda item singling out only one state, the Jewish state, for targeting?” he concluded. “Where is the apartheid?”

An estimated 700,000 Jews living in Arab and Muslim countries were assimilated into the newly-established state of Israel after 1948, often after fleeing riots, persecution, confiscation and destruction of property, and discriminatory laws.