Israelis Cry Foul as UN Leaders Lament 50 Years of ‘Occupation’

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Israeli leaders on Tuesday attacked the secretary general of United Nations for a statement in which he decried the ongoing “occupation” of Palestinian territories.

Marking the 50th anniversary of the Six Day War, António Guterres issued a statement lamenting the effects of Israel’s subsequent occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan, which he said caused the “displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Syrians” and “fueled recurring cycles of violence and retribution.”

Ending the occupation that began in 1967 by creating a Palestinian state was the only way to bring peace to the region, he argued.

“This occupation has imposed a heavy humanitarian and development burden on the Palestinian people,” [Guterres said in the statement](https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sgsm18554.doc.htm). “Among them are generation after generation of Palestinians who have been compelled to grow up and live in ever more crowded refugee camps, many in abject poverty, and with little or no prospect of a better life for their children.”

Israel’s ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon, responded by saying that attacks on Israel by its neighbors did not begin in 1967.

“Any attempt at a moral equivalency between killing innocent people and the building of homes is absurd,” he said.

Instead of spreading “Palestinian misinformation” the UN should stick to the facts, Danon added.

“It is preposterous to blame terror and violence in the Middle East on the one true democracy in the region,” he said. “The moment the Palestinian leadership abandons terror, ceases to incite against our people and finally returns to direct negotiations, then real progress can be made towards peace.”

Later he wagged a finger at UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al-Hussein for starting off a session of the UN Human Rights Council by [lamenting Palestinian suffering](http://www.timesofisrael.com/un-rights-czar-nothing-is-like-holocaust-but-palestinians-are-suffering/).

“It comes as no surprise that he chose to spread lies about Israel before he even mentioned the massacres in Syria. The Commissioner has forgotten that it is his job to care for human rights throughout the world, not to incite against Israel,” Danon said in a statement. He added that he hoped the US and Israel would work to reform the body.

Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely called on Guterres to retract his comments and to “correct the distortion” promoted at the UN that claims Israel’s control over the Golan and the West Bank was an occupation.

“On the day when the UN sticks to the facts and ceases the misguided use of the term ‘occupation’ it will restore its credibility as an organization founded to uphold justice and truth,” she said in a statement.

Israel is celebrating the 50th anniversary of “the liberation of Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria, and these are the facts,” she added.

Also marking the Six Day War’s 50th anniversary, the UN coordinator for humanitarian aid and development activities condemned Israeli policies in the territories. “It should be obvious, but it bears repeating, that occupation is ugly,” Robert Piper said [in a statement released Tuesday](https://www.ochaopt.org/content/statement-un-coordinator-humanitarian-aid-and-development-activities-robert-piper-50th).

“Living under foreign military rule for years on end, generates despair, suffocates initiative and leaves generations in a kind of political and economic limbo,” he said.

The Israeli occupation is backed by an “ever-present security apparatus” that deliberately isolates isolated Palestinian communities from each other and hamstrings economic activity and deprives many Palestinians of basic rights, Piper charged. “In too many cases, these policies have violated international humanitarian law as well as the human rights instruments to which Israel is a party.”