UN official: Social media largely controlled by Jewish lobby, NGOs

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<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-713126>

A United Nations human-rights investigator spoke of the Jewish lobby and the overuse of antisemitism in a wide-ranging interview with the Mondoweiss website that was published on Monday. He questioned Israel’s membership in the 193-nation global body.

“We are very disheartened by the social media that is controlled largely by – whether it is the Jewish lobby or specific NGOs,” said Indian human-rights expert Miloon Kothari.

He is one of three members of the “UN Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel,” which was created last year and is tasked with issuing reports twice a year.

The COI is unusual in that its mandate is open-ended, and it is tasked with investigating human-rights violations in sovereign Israel as well as in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israel has [accused the COI of bias](https://www.jpost.com/bds-threat/hundreds-of-legislators-call-on-un-to-stop-israel-discrimination-679318). The COI has warned that it plans to investigate Israel for the crime of apartheid.

COI members have said, including to *The Jerusalem Post* [in June](https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/article-709511), they eventually intend to examine the question of apartheid as it relates to Israel.

“We will get to [the apartheid question](https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/article-709511) at some point in the future,” Kothari said. “We will be looking at discrimination in general, you know, from the river to the sea.”

He accused Israel of disregarding intentional [human-rights law](https://www.jpost.com/bds-threat/article-712721) and UN resolutions, including snubbing the COI by refusing to cooperate with it and banning it from visiting.

“I would go as far as to raise the question of why are they [Israel] even a member of the UN,” Kothari said.

“The Israeli government does not respect its own obligations as a UN member state,” he said. “They consistently either directly or through the US try to undermine UN mechanisms.”

Kothari cautioned against focusing too much on the issue of apartheid, adding that it is not a useful paradigm.

“We do not think it’s sufficient to capture the enormity of what has happened in the area,” he said. “It does not look at the whole history of settler colonialism. It does not look at the whole issue of occupation. It doesn’t look at many other dimensions.”

“When we are asked to look at it, root causes are very important to draw the full picture,” Kothari said.

“Just ending apartheid is not going to end occupation,” he said. “There is a much deeper and a much more comprehensive review that has to be done, and that is what we are doing.”

What else will the COI tackle?

The COI will also “tackle this issue of how far you can take antisemitism,” Kothari said.

The COI plans to execute investigations and to work with other UN bodies, including the International Criminal Court, which is now in the midst of a [war-crimes probe against Israel](https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/navi-pillay-to-head-unhrcs-permanent-war-crimes-probe-against-israel-674632), he said.

“We will be working closely with the ICC,” Kothari said, adding that the COI had met with the ICC’s deputy prosecutor.

The COI also plans to be in dialogue with UN member states, including European countries and their parliaments, he said.

Regarding actions it asks countries to take, Kothari said the COI would be targeting arms supplies to Israel and business dealings that involve human-rights violations, including in [West Bank settlements](https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-712767).

“We want to continue to expose” Israel’s actions, he said. “You cannot allow a country in the world to get away with this kind of” activity, he added.

“Israel has no intention of ending the occupation, and the persistent discrimination against the Palestinians lies at the heart of the systematic recurrence of violations,” Kothari said.

The COI is chaired by South African human-rights expert Navi Pillay, who is a former UN high commissioner for human rights. The third COI member is Australian legal expert Chris Sidoti.

COI - anti-Israel

NGO Monitor legal adviser Anne Herzberg said the Mondoweiss interview with Kothari revealed the extent of the anti-Israel bias of the COI. He admits that the “COI is solely targeting Israel,” and “most egregiously, he questions why Israel is allowed to be a member of the UN,” she said.

“Kothari’s outrageous statements add to the extreme prejudice towards Israel expressed by the members of the COI prior to their appointment, and it is clear that they were selected precisely because of this prejudice,” Herzberg said.

“UN member states should demand full disclosure from [UN] High Commissioner Michele Bachelet regarding how Kothari and the other Commissioners were selected, and they should immediately defund this broken body.”