UN bias toward Israel does nothing to achieve peace - editorial

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The comments by the [UN’s Miloon Kothari](https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-713126) last week were shocking but not surprising. Kothari is on a three-member panel appointed by the UN last year to conduct an unprecedented open-ended [war-crimes probe against Israel](https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-689705). Along with Kothari, the panel comprises chairwoman Navi Pillay, a former UN high commissioner for Human Rights, who in the past has supported calls to boycott and sanction Israel, and Australian legal expert Chris Sidoti, who has also made disturbing remarks recently.

The “UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including east Jerusalem, and in Israel” was initially approved in May 2021 by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council. It followed in the wake of the 11-day war that started when Hamas in Gaza launched thousands of rockets on Israel, starting with Jerusalem, and Israel in response launched [Operation Guardian of the Walls](https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-713235).

The creation of the commission of inquiry (COI) to investigate Israel – and not Hamas – in perpetuity, is itself shameful. That the panel is composed of three people known to have voiced negative views about Israel, the subject of their investigation, compounds the problems. Nothing the commission or its members have done or said in the meantime even partially mitigates concerns of the built-in bias against Israel. Sidoti rejected criticism when the first report was published in June saying some Jews were throwing around accusations of antisemitism “like rice at a wedding.”

Last week, however, Kothari raised the rhetoric and did away with the last vestiges of pretense of impartiality. Upset by criticism of the COI, including by some governments, Kothari said in an interview with the Mondoweiss website: “We are very disheartened by the social media that is controlled largely by – whether it is the Jewish lobby or specific NGOs – a lot of money is being thrown into trying to discredit us.” The Indian lawyer, in addition, said “I would go as far as to raise the question of why Israel is even a member of the United Nations.”

Kothari’s comments combine the abhorrent but frequently heard antisemitic tropes of Jewish control of the media backed by Jewish money. For good measure, he also clearly questions Israel’s right to exist along with its membership in the 193-member United Nations.

The UN consistently singles out Israel for investigation and condemnation: The COI is only the latest addition to the clauses mandating that the UN Security Council scrutinize Israeli actions in regular quarterly reports and the UNHRC’s discussions ensuring it condemns Israel more than any other country in the world. And there are many other examples of hypocrisy and double standards. As the UN Watch monitoring NGO noted last week, “Libya, Russia and Zimbabwe were among members of the UN’s 54-nation Economic and Social Council, a principal organ of the world body, who voted on July 22 to single out Israel as the only country in the world to be rebuked by the council this year for allegedly violating women’s rights.”

Kothari, however, clearly crossed a redline even by the UN’s low standards when it comes to treating Israel fairly, as a sovereign member state. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, US ambassador to the UN, said, “There should be no place for such antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment at the UN,” adding that these remarks “cannot go unaddressed.” Deborah E. Lipstadt, US special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, described the remarks as “outrageous,” particularly from an appointed member of a commission of inquiry.

UNHRC President Federico Villegas, who is Argentina’s ambassador to the UN in Geneva, said on Friday that Kothari’s comments could be described as antisemitic. “I respectfully suggest that Commissioner Kothari consider the possibility of publicly clarifying his unfortunate comments and his intentions behind them,” Representatives of other countries have also spoken out against Kothari’s remarks including the US, UK, Germany, France, Canada and the Czech Republic. Michèle Taylor, US ambassador to the UNHRC, said Kothari’s words “sadly exacerbate our deep concerns about the open-ended nature and overly broad scope of the COI and the HRC’s disproportionate and biased treatment of Israel.”

The time has come to put an end to the farce. The Commission of Inquiry into Israel does nothing to further peace. On the contrary, it empowers and emboldens those terrorist organizations that would like to destroy Israel. Ultimately, the UN’s bias and double standards harm that once august body as much as they harm Israel.