How Ban Ki-moon Undermines the UN’s Universal Values

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In his implementation of disparate standards for different nations, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon undermines the most basic values of the United Nations. Yet he often unjustifiably escapes the brunt of the criticism regarding bias leveled at this intergovernmental organization and several of its agencies.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a major cornerstone of UN policy. Its purpose was to define the most basic universal values. The declaration was a response to the Holocaust, aiming to avoid moral relativism, the concept that key values may differ based on culture or history. Such moral relativism enabled the classification of Nazism’s murderous approach as something excusable due to the extremist German culture and the anti-Semitic attitudes prevailing in Europe at the time.

As secretary general of the United Nations, Ban should be the prime guardian of universal values. He should thus have severely reprimanded bodies such as the UN Human Rights Council and UNESCO, which regularly employ moral relativism against Israel. The two Gaza reports prepared for the UNHRC, the Goldstone Report and the report investigating 2014’s Operation Protective Edge, are probably the worst illustrations of the UN’s moral relativism.

Ban however does not admonish UN agencies which use moral relativism. He apparently prefers to apply this discriminatory approach himself, implementing different standards for Israel as compared with other countries. The frequent failure of the secretary general to treat Israel fairly has been illustrated by a variety of critics. If one combines some of their statements one gets a picture of what is wrong with his behavior.

In 2013 Ban disingenuously stated that he does not believe the UN is biased against Israel. In his words, “The Israeli government maybe raised this issue that there’s some bias against Israel, but Israel is one of the 193 member states. Thus, Israel should have equal rights and opportunities without having any bias, any discrimination. That’s a fundamental principle of the United Nations charter. And thus, Israel should be fully given such rights.”

Many member nations however do not allow Israel to exercise these rights and the Jewish state is continuously demonized at the United Nations. Ban does the same himself.

In August 2014, at the height of Israel’s Protective Edge campaign, Ban addressed an emergency meeting of the General Assembly about potential violations of international humanitarian law by Israeli officials, accusing Israel of disproportionality.

Israel’s current ambassador to the United Nations Ron Prosor has no qualms about exposing Ban’s moral relativism and does so frequently. In that session he said: “If the UN assembly had invested a tenth of the energy invested in investigating Israel, it would reveal horrific war crimes on the part of Hamas.”

Additional responses to Ban’s statements at the GA included that of former Israeli ambassador to Canada Alan Baker and Nachi Eyal, director of the International Action Division and CEO of the Legal Forum for Israel. They wrote that they were dismayed that Ban and UN member nations would accuse Israel of war crimes yet were silent about UNRWA facilities being used to hold Hamas rockets.

They added, “In permitting the storage of weapons, and in transferring such weapons into the hands of Hamas, the UN has in fact permitted itself to become accessory to the commission of war crimes.”

Ban issued a statement in connection with the March 2015 democratic elections in Israel, declaring that Israel could only “remain a democratic state” if it stopped the construction of settlements. Prosor responded, “The United Nations may disagree with the policies of the Israeli government but there is one fact that cannot be disputed: that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. If the UN is so concerned about the future of the Palestinian people, [then] it should be asking why [PA] President [Mahmoud] Abbas is in the tenth year of a five-year presidential term.”

Ban criticized Israel for causing suffering to children in Operation Protective Edge, after a June 2015 report on children in armed conflict was released in Ban’s name. It was prepared by Leila Zerrougui, of Algeria. Israeli deputy foreign minister Tzipi Hotovely responded, “At a time when ceaseless war rages in the Middle East and children are slaughtered on a daily basis, the UN decides to mention Israel in the same breath with states that since long ago have not had any basic human rights.” She also emphasized the efforts Israel made to warn Gazan civilians of potential attacks, “while Hamas cynically uses children and civilian facilities and intentionally causes harm to the lives of people. The State of Israel will continue to wage its campaign to reveal the truth and will not harm its right to self-defense.”

Ban added, “The unprecedented and unacceptable scale of the impact on children in 2014 raises grave concerns about Israel’s compliance with international humanitarian law... [and] excessive use of force.”

Prosor replied that Israel’s request to provide information to the UN report was refused. Instead the report’s author solely chose to use sources from radical anti-Israel groups.

Prosor mentioned that 10% of the report was devoted to Israel’s aggression toward children, whereas 2% discussed Iraq and 6% discussed Syria.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also responded to Ban’s statements, saying there is “no limit” to the UN’s hypocrisy: “Instead of highlighting the fact that Hamas made hostages of Gaza’s children when it fired at Israel from preschools, and dug tunnels toward Israeli preschools, the UN has again chosen to reproach Israel.”

Alan Dershowitz put it succinctly: “Ban Ki-moon is part of the problem rather than part of the solution in the Middle East.”

Indeed the secretary general is supposed to extinguish the fires destroying the UN’s universal values. Yet the above quotes concerning Israel show that Ban is actually an arsonist fanning the flames of moral relativism.