Sweden, Latvia, Denmark bring final Durban IV boycotter count to 37

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Thirty-seven countries in total boycotted the Durban IV conference at the United Nations on Wednesday, over the event’s history of antisemitism and anti-Israel bias.

Sweden, Latvia and Denmark announced their boycott on Thursday, the day after the event took place.

The other countries boycotting Durban IV were: Albania, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Montenegro, Moldova, Netherlands, North Macedonia, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, the UK, the US and Uruguay.

Swedish Ambassador to Israel Erik Ullenhag said his country “didn’t participate in the high-level meeting marking the 20th anniversary of the Durban Declaration. We stand firm in the fight against racism and antisemitism in all its forms.”

The decision came days after Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid spoke with his Swedish counterpart Ann Linde, the highest-level contacts between the countries in seven years, since Sweden recognized a Palestinian state.

Lapid said on Thursday that the fact that more countries boycotted the Durban Review Conference than ever before comes from “intensive diplomatic work for the good of the State of Israel.”

“I thank the countries that dropped out,” Lapid tweeted. “It is touching and inspires pride that we are not alone in the fight against antisemitism.

Wednesday’s event, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, marked 20 years since the World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa. The 2001 event was rife with antisemitism, with accredited groups at its NGO forum distributing copies of the antisemitic canard The Protocols of the Elders of Zion together with cartoons of hook-nosed Jews, and thousands marching against Israel, calling it an apartheid state. Thousands protested against Israel, with signs equating the Star of David to a swastika and praising Hitler.

During the 2009 Durban Review Conference, then-president of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad denied the Holocaust, calling it a pretext for Israeli oppression of Palestinians. He was invited back to Durban III in 2011, where he again denied the Holocaust.

Durban IV reaffirmed the original Durban Declaration, in which the Israel-Palestinian conflict is the only one specifically mentioned.

However, few of the speakers mentioned Israel, mostly focusing on the conference’s official subject, “reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent.”

At the conference, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki compared the Palestinians’ situation to that of black South Africans under apartheid, declaring, “Our people will persevere. We will not relent. We owe it to our people to fight for a reality free of racism.”