**Jerusalem Begins Diplomatic Fight Against UN Commission Inquiry On Gaza**

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Israel this week launched a campaign to thwart the UN Commission of Inquiry on Gaza, directing its diplomats to ensure that a majority of the 47 countries on the UN body that established the commission do not endorse its report.

The commission, headed by William Schabas, is due to present its findings to the UN Human Rights Council on March 23, just six days after the elections. A vote on the findings will be held a few days later.

According to a Foreign Ministry cable sent to Israel’s representatives abroad, the goal of the campaign is to get “as many countries as possible – with the hope that at least 24 will not approve the committee’s findings – to either vote against, abstain or not show up [for the vote].”

The cable said while Israel does not have diplomatic relations with 11 countries on the council, and the battle in a number of other countries is already lost, “with proper diplomatic activity it is possible to influence not a small number of members.”

Israel is refusing to cooperate with the commission, and the committee is therefore gathering testimony using technological means or through interviews done from Jordan.

Part of the campaign against the commission will be to discredit its head, Canadian international law professor Schabas, who in 2012 said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would be his “favorite person” to bring to the International Criminal Court.

In 2009 Schabas – who has accused Israel of war crimes and crimes against humanity – expressed surprise that Sudan’s president, and not then-Israeli president Shimon Peres, would be prosecuted by the ICC.

“The Schabas Commission was born in sin,” said Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon, explaining Israel’s decision to launch a campaign to discredit it. “Its mandate is highly distorted, and its head has decided to indict Israel even before the commission started its work. This is a sham, a mockery of justice, and reminiscent of the Inquisition trials.”

Nahshon labeled the Human Rights Council “an anti-Israel body which has no intention whatsoever of judging Israel fairly and honestly.”

He added that this was “demonstrated by the distorted mandate given to the commission, and by the appointment of a person highly hostile to Israel as its chairman.”