

United Nations Nations Unies

INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
ON THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING EAST JERUSALEM, AND ISRAEL

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Submission sheet

Individuals, groups and organizations wishing to submit information and documentation to the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel (hereafter the “COI”) are kindly asked to fill in this sheet with any information they are able to provide, and attach it to their submissions.

It is not a requirement to provide all requested information if not available, though particular attention should be given to filling in the section on consent.

Unless indicated otherwise in the form, the COI will consider all materials received to be usable in its reports, but without attribution as to the source.

Name of submitting individual/entity	South African Friends of Israel
Contact of submitting individual/entity	Email(s): info@safisa.co.za Telephone/WhatsApp/Signal/Other: +27681687855 Web Address: Agree to be contacted by the COI: Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Relationship of submitting entity/individual to the alleged victim/s	
Human rights violation/s or abuses alleged to have occurred	
Violations of the laws and customs of war (international humanitarian law)	
Date/s of incident/time period	DD/MM/YYYY
Place of incident	Village/township/city: Province:
Name/s of alleged victim/s gender, age	Name: Gender Age: Father’s name: Nationality: Profession Phone number/email: Address:
Identification of those allegedly responsible	Name of alleged perpetrator if known: State or non-state entity with which perpetrator is affiliated, if any: Any identifying marks of the perpetrator which indicate their affiliation, such as the colour or pattern of their uniform and uniform’s insignia:

Description of the incident(s)/allegations (2000-word limit)	<p>Detailed description of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the incident(s) or alleged violation(s), including dates, specific locations (e.g. street, building), and number, type, and name(s) of victim(s) - the context in which they took place - alleged perpetrators - alleged motive <p>Please also include information on the impact of these violations, as well as age and gender-sensitive considerations (e.g. how these violations affected women and men, girls and boys differently).</p>
Description of the State's response, (500-word limit)	<p>Indicate whether the incident was reported to the authorities: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, which authorities: _____</p> <p>Information on any investigations, judicial processes, decision/judgements and sentences, including reparations, in response to the incident:</p>
Methodology employed in the collection of information	<p>Please provide a description of the methodology employed in the collection of the information shared- primary, secondary sources, means of verification, etc., along with how informed consent was gained from the information provider. If needed, attach a copy of the relevant standard operating procedures followed.</p>
Consent	<p>Please indicate whether you, the person submitting the information, agree to the following use of the information by the COI with or without personally identifiable data:</p> <p><u>INFORMED CONSENT TO USE THE INFORMATION:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use internally and publicly (e.g. public report, press release), with <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> without <input type="checkbox"/> personally identifiable data. 2. Use internally only (within the COI), with <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> without <input type="checkbox"/> personally identifiable data. <p><u>INFORMED CONSENT TO SHARE THE INFORMATION:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise the case with national authorities, courts or accountability mechanisms that respect international standards (including due process) with <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> without <input type="checkbox"/> personally identifiable data. 2. Share information with national human rights institutions, with <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> without <input type="checkbox"/> personally identifiable data. 3. Refer to national or international organizations (including UN human rights mechanisms and other UN entities) providing victim

	<p>assistance (e.g. ICRC, medical, legal), with <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> without <input type="checkbox"/> personally identifiable data.</p> <p>4. Share info with international and regional courts – including the International Criminal Court (ICC) -, or accountability mechanisms of other States that respect international standards (including due process) with <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> without <input type="checkbox"/> personally identifiable data.</p> <p><u>Additional Details on Consent:</u></p> <p>Please indicate if consent to provide this information to the CoI has been received from the alleged victims (any consent given must be provided by the victim or by relatives or legal representatives on their behalf, or by a parent/legal guardian in case of a child) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>; consent provided by: _____</p> <p>If necessary, please explain:</p>
<p>Description of any broader issues not related to specific violations (2000-word limit)</p>	<p>Description should be succinct, highlighting issues of relevance to the mandate of the COI, and include concrete examples whenever possible.</p> <p>Please also include information on the impact of these violations, as well as age and gender-sensitive considerations (e.g. how these violations affected women and men, girls and boys differently) as relevant.</p>
<p>Any other human rights NGOs to whom you reported the incident</p>	<p>If appropriate, please provide name and contact information of any other person or organization to whom the incident was reported.</p>
<p>Additional materials (documents, images, videos, etc) relevant to the incident(s)/allegation(s)</p>	<p>Please indicate, if you are aware of, or in possession of, any additional materials from other sources (including the media and NGOs) in which the above incident(s)/allegations are cited, that are deemed relevant/useful. The COI may follow-up at a later date in order to receive the material(s) indicated.</p> <p>Date of publication: Title: Source (author/organisation): Web link: Type of material: Documents <input type="checkbox"/> (total doc); Images <input type="checkbox"/> (total images); Videos <input type="checkbox"/> (total videos); Other (please specify)</p>



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United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry (UNCOI) on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
Palais Wilson
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April 2022

Submission to inform the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, of the perceived injuries and threats that this Commission of Inquiry poses to the Jewish State of Israel, given the terms of reference.

Table of contents

Executive Summary

Introduction

Submission

1. "Facts and circumstances regarding alleged violations of international humanitarian law and alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April 2021."

1.1 Coexistence requires mutual respect

1.2 Extremism diminishes the respectability of religion

1.3 The apartheid label is erroneous and unhelpful

1.4 Apartheid was a cruel reality, not a theory to be weaponised against Israel and the Jews

1.5 Israel is a friendly nation, not an apartheid state

1.7 Nelson Mandela provides a balanced approach

2. "Recommendations on measures to be taken by third States to ensure respect for international humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem."

2.1 Peace based on justice

2.2 Israel is a partner for peace and prosperity, and must be protected

2.3 Israel respects religious plurality

2.4 Judge fairly

2.5 Sow the seeds of peace and reap prosperity

Conclusion

Introduction

South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) is a coalition of individuals and organisations from Christian, political, and socio-economic backgrounds, from South Africa and abroad, who support the independent and democratic State of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people.

We are driven by the compelling need to work towards creating the foundations upon which peace between Israel and the Palestinians can be built.

We bring to your attention the following submission, based on two of the guidelines* taken from the list of guidelines provided by the COI under which we may present submissions:

1. *"Facts and circumstances regarding alleged violations of international humanitarian law and alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April 2021."*
2. *"Recommendations on measures to be taken by third States to ensure respect for international humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem."*

*(<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIOPT-Israel/Pages/Index.aspx>)

We trust that the COI will receive our submission in the spirit of sincere good faith in which it is presented.

Executive Summary

South African Friends of Israel is a coalition of allies of the independent and democratic Jewish state of Israel that include Christian churches, political activists and advocates for socio-economic change. We believe that Israel and the Palestinian people are able to reach a negotiated solution to their conflict, if they are given the necessary support. It is our view that divisions arise when an unfair apportioning of blame for the beginning and continuation of this conflict is placed on either side. However we do see extremists, who use Islam and its holy sites as cover for their evil deeds, as the greatest cause of this conflict and its continuance.

As allies of Israel, we do not have animosity towards the Palestinians, and we believe that mutual respect for the humanity of individuals and organisations on both sides of the conflict is attainable. Moreover, we call for support of Muslims who practise Islam as a religion of peace, and those whom we abhor the weaponisation of religion as much as we do.

We believe that the COI terms of reference, in alluding to 13 April 2021, are poorly conceived. The wording suggests that the events that took place on this date were premeditated violations and abuses of international law on Israel's part, not a failure of Israelis and Palestinians to live together. Encouraging Israelis and the Palestinians to engage in the negotiations that would make coexistence possible and fruitful, should be an implied intention of this COI, but the wording suggests that it is not.

The events of 13 April 2021 resulted from a breakdown in trust and communication between the Palestinians and Israel, and we believe that everything must be done to calm tensions and passions in the interactions between the Palestinians and Israel, starting now and into the future.

Submission

1."Facts and circumstances regarding alleged violations of international humanitarian law and alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April 2021"

1.1 Coexistence requires mutual respect

We believe that the use of the date of 13 April 2021, as the pivotal date for the COI's investigation, establishes a one-sided frame of reference that excludes Israel as an injured party in this inquiry, and will only serve to continue the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, diminish the sanctity of international law, and undermine religion and nationalism. We believe that it sets Israel up for investigation as a human rights violator, and that it suggests that this is a part of Israel's national psyche. That it allows room for extremists to appropriate religious holy days and sites as covers for acts that undermine the ability of Jews and Muslims to peacefully coexist. Moreover, we believe it will play into the hands of Israel's detractors, who have adopted a deliberate practice of over-simplifying this immensely complex conflict, as a tool for their anti-Israel advocacy.

From our perspective, 13 April 2021 saw Israel Defence Forces (IDF) left with no choice but to move to demand respect for the rights of Jewish Israelis at the Western Wall, who had gathered to pray and celebrate Memorial Day¹. It had been requested that the Islamic call to prayer not be sounded so loud as to drown out the Memorial Day celebration at the Western Wall, but Israel's request was not heeded.

However, according to the UN COI's framing of this point, it appears that Israel is accused of launching a racially motivated violation of a gathering of peaceful Muslim worshippers at Al Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount/Haram esh-Sharif, by switching off the loudspeakers whose sound was making it impossible for Memorial Day celebrations to take place. We not only disagree with this characterisation, but we call on the UN to press for the peaceful sharing of the space of the Temple Mount/Haram esh-Sharif, which includes the Western Wall.

We believe that, were they given the opportunity to express themselves, many Muslims would be willing to share the Temple Mount/Haram esh-Sharif with their Jewish compatriots and neighbours. Instead, those with hostile attitudes to Israel and the Jews have been given the louder voice, and have been allowed to use this holy site as a political tool.

1.2 Extremism diminishes the respectability of religion

In conducting its investigation on events leading up to and following from 13 April 2021, we ask the COI to refrain from grouping together as one extremists and sincere, peaceful worshippers at the Temple Mount/Haram esh-Sharif. This does nothing but tarnish the image of Islam, and "*flattens the complex, multiple differences between Muslims, and effectively reduces diversity among Muslims to the extent to which they pose a security threat*"².

As an organisation that believes in the attainability of human fraternity, we call on the UN to recognise that any

¹ the Western Wall, Jerusalem, 29 Nisan 5781 April 11, 2021, Remembrance Day for Israel's Fallen: Ceremony at the Western Wall Plaza, <https://thekotel.org/en/35249/>

² (pp.162) : Margaretha A. van Es, Nina ter Laan & Erik Meinema (2021) *Beyond 'radical' versus 'moderate'? New perspectives on the politics of moderation in Muslim majority and Muslim minority settings*, *Religion*, 51:2, 161-168, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2021.1865616>

justification of religious extremism is a gross injustice against peaceful and sincere religious practitioners globally, and in this case, we are particularly concerned for the well-being of our Muslim brothers and sisters in the Levant and across the world.

We ask the UN to examine how extremism masquerading as piety is contributing to the continuation of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, and to stoking intercommunity suspicions, which scupper attempts to form relationships between people from different religious backgrounds. Such relationships could be a game-changing contribution to peacebuilding³ because religion gives meaning to the lives of billions of people, is fundamental to defining the human character, forms part of human heritage, and a right to freedom of religious expression is, in general, universally respected. Therefore, we ask that the COI call for respect for religion, and for the ending of its abuse and weaponisation.

1.3 The apartheid lable is erroneous and unhelpful

Many anti-Israel organisations are rejoicing in the terms of reference of this COI, in that it appears to single out Israel for reproach, and could be seen as following an established trend of seeking to build a case of “apartheid” against the Jewish State.

We call on this UN COI to recognise that those making this erroneous claim against Israel⁴, “*can only advance [the] apartheid lie by falsely presenting Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza as one political unit, regardless of peace treaties willingly signed by both Israeli and Palestinian leaders*”⁵. The COI must surely see that applying the apartheid label to Israel is not only legally wrong, but also a gross undermining of Israel’s integrity as a democratic and independent state. It is our view that such an act of misrepresentation of international law is an abuse of power, which will result in a miscarriage of justice.

We agree with Judge Goldstone when he says, “*While ‘apartheid’ can have a broader meaning, its use is meant to evoke the situation in pre-1994 South Africa. It is an unfair and inaccurate slander against Israel, calculated to retard rather than advance peace negotiations.*”⁶ As South Africans, we echo Judge Goldstone and believe that a characterisation such as this is insulting to Israel, and painful to the history of South Africans who suffered under real apartheid. We recommend the book Drawing Fire: Investigating the Accusations of Apartheid in Israel⁷ by anti-apartheid journalist Benjamin Pogrund to fully explain the problematic nature of the analogy.

³ Jerusalem Post, all Arab News Staff, Published: MARCH 19, 2022 18:21, Updated: MARCH 19, 2022 18:23, [Evangelical, Muslim and Jewish leaders commit to working together](https://www.jpost.com/christianworld/article-701187), <https://www.jpost.com/christianworld/article-701187>

⁴ Amnesty International, 2022 [Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: a cruel system of domination and a crime against humanity](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/>

And Human Rights Watch, 2021, [A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution](https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>

⁵ Jordan Cope, Published: FEBRUARY 19, 2022 15:48 Updated: FEBRUARY 19, 2022 15:58, *How Amnesty's anti-Israel apartheid report backfired - opinion*, [Jerusalem Post](https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-696996), <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-696996>

⁶Richard J. Goldstone, Oct. 31, 2011, *Israel and the Apartheid Slander*, [The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/opinion/israel-and-the-apartheid-slander.html), <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/opinion/israel-and-the-apartheid-slander.html>

⁷ Benjamin Pogrund, 2014, [Drawing Fire: Investigating the Accusations of Apartheid in Israel](#), Rowman & Littlefield, United Kingdom

1.4 Apartheid was a cruel reality, not a theory to be weaponised against Israel and the Jews

The lived experiences of South Africans is that under apartheid black people wanted equality before the law; and equal access to education, employment opportunities, healthcare and other government services. These are legally protected rights that Palestinian and Arabs citizens of Israel enjoy at this very moment. This view of the situation is shared by many Arab Israelis, none less than Member of the Knesset (MK) Mansour Abbas, who says, “*I would not call it apartheid*”⁸. The report in which he is quoted goes on to say, “*He defended his position by pointing out the obvious: that he leads an Israeli-Arab party that is a member of the government’s coalition.*”

While many whites in South Africa wanted nothing less than to remove blacks from their society (except where they played the role of cheap and expendable labour), successive governments of Israel have enshrined the equality of Palestinians and Arabs as citizens of Israel in their founding and subsequent national documents.

The truth that Israel’s detractors wish to ignore is that Jewish Israelis have always sought peace, much as black South Africans did, but have endured ostracisation from their Arab neighbours for decades. In Palestinian societies, those who dare reach out a hand of friendship to the Jews, do so at the risk of their lives, just as white South Africans did when they reached out to their black countrymen and women during the time of apartheid.

We ask the COI to acknowledge that this contrast between South Africa from 1948 to 1994 and Israel today, is clear.

1.5 A difference in national charters

While black South Africans were led by those who sought to live in peace with whites, Palestinians are led by those who seek to eliminate the Jews. This is shown in the different expressions of nationalism by South Africans and Palestinians.

In his fight against apartheid, South Africa’s first democratically elected president, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, wanted South Africa to be a land where all racial groups live in peace. This was symbolised by The Freedom Charter, a documented pronouncement of the national aspirations of South Africans from all racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds. This inclusive nationalism is contrasted with the deplorable situation where Palestinian people are led by organisations that refuse to acknowledge Israel’s legal and legitimate right to exist as a Jewish state. They even go so far as declaring a vision of Palestinian nationalism that calls for the elimination of Jews and their homeland, i.e. the killing of all Jews.

The famous opening declaration of The Freedom Charter, “*South Africa belongs to all who live in it*”, is very different to the words of Article Fifteen of The Charter Of Allah: The Platform Of The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), which states unequivocally that, “*When our enemies usurp some Islamic lands, Jihad becomes a duty binding on all Muslims. In order to face the usurpation of Palestine by the Jews, we have no escape from raising the banner of Jihad.*”¹⁰

⁸ Tovah Lazaroff Published: FEBRUARY 11, 2022 15:24, Updated: FEBRUARY 12, 2022 15:29, *MK Mansour Abbas: Israel is not an apartheid state*, Jerusalem Post, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/article-696212>

⁹ The Congress of the People, 26 June 1955, The Freedom Charter, Kliptown, South Africa, <https://www.anc1912.org.za/the-freedom-charter-2/>

¹⁰ Hamas, 1988, The Charter Of Allah: The Platform Of The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), Translation by Raphael

1.6 Israel is a friendly nation, not an apartheid state

As a country's foreign policy is a reflection of its national character, we will highlight how Israel can be understood by its actions abroad. We ask the commissioners of this COI to allow the facts to speak for themselves.

The examples of Israel's democratic and humanitarian spirit are many, here are a few: As the world watches Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Israel is spending millions of dollars in coordinating evacuations, and in sending humanitarian aid, and teams of doctors and workers there to help relieve the plight of the over ten million refugees who have fled and are fleeing their homes¹¹; Operation Solomon, was a coordinated program of the state of Israel that, in 1991, rescued 14 300 Ethiopian Jews from famine and warfare¹²; Innovation: Africa is an Israel government backed NGO, which is ending the social ills that the lack of clean water and electricity cause in various African societies¹³. These are not the actions of an apartheid state or of a people who hold to an apartheid mentality.

1.7 Nelson Mandela provides a balanced approach

We ask this COI to adopt a balanced approach toward Israel and to the Palestinians in conducting its work. Such a balanced approach was displayed by our beloved Madiba when in 1993 he said, in his capacity as African National Congress (ANC) president, *"As a movement, we recognize the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism just as we recognize the legitimacy of Zionism as a Jewish nationalism... We insist on the right of the State of Israel to exist within secure borders, but with equal vigor support the Palestinian right to national self-determination."*¹⁴

We sincerely doubt that Madiba would approve of a situation where the antisemitism of Hamas is put on the same moral grounding as the righteous fight of black people like him, against the white supremacy of apartheid. Mandela never sought to eliminate white people from the land of South Africa, rather he preached reconciliation, which earned him the love and respect of even his own jailer on Robben Island¹⁵. We ask this UN COI to consider the harm that allowing the apartheid label to be applied to Israel does to the legacy of anti-apartheid stalwarts like Mandela, who wanted to live in peace with their white compatriots.

2. "Recommendations on measures to be taken by third States to ensure respect for international humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem."

2.1 Peace based on justice and unity

In expanding our submission to include a discussion under this second point, South African Friends of Israel believes

Israeli, Harry Truman Research Institute, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel, <https://irp.fas.org/world/para/docs/880818.htm>

¹¹ Amy Spiro, 6 March 2022, 2:01 pm *Israel's Foreign Ministry to boost aid to Ukraine, including generators for hospital*, Times of Israel, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israels-foreign-ministry-to-boost-aid-to-ukraine-including-generators-for-hospital/>

¹² The Jewish Agency for Israel, 2021, Marking the 30th anniversary of a historic, record-breaking Aliyah operation, <https://www.jewishagency.org/operation-solomon/>

¹³ Innovation: Africa, copyright 2022, About Us, <https://www.innoafrica.org/about-us.html>

¹⁴ RAPHAEL AHREN, 6 December 2013, 1:54 am, *Nelson Mandela was close to Jews, resolutely loyal to Palestinians*, The Times of Israel, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/nelson-mandela-was-close-to-jews-resolutely-loyal-to-palestinians/>

¹⁵ Christo Brand and Barbara Jones, Mandela: My Prisoner, My Friend, 2014, Thomas Dunne Books publishers, USA.

that on this issue we share common ground with almost all parties involved in, and affected by the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel, in that we wish for there to be a universal respect for international humanitarian law, and a peaceful resolution of this conflict based on truth and justice.

Given the vast amount of work that has been done in brokering peace in this conflict, with such foundational achievements as the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, - the *Oslo Accords* (1993), it would be wrong to now divide third-party States into pro and anti-Israel camps, through this COI.

This is not to suggest that creating division is the intention behind the COI, but with the reports that will emerge from this COI in June and September 2022, set to be presented as evidence to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to launch a criminal investigation of Israel, we feel such stratification will be an inevitable outcome of this process.

The COI's current terms of reference, wherein the wording seems designed to hold only Israel to account for the protraction of this conflict, will lead to this. It is our view that the most effective measures that third party States can take, is to hold both Israel and the Palestinians fairly to account and to work to bring the Palestinians and Israel back to the negotiating table.

2.2 Israel is a partner for peace and prosperity, and must be protected

Fairness and justice include calling on the UN, as the paramount organisation facilitating multilateral cooperation, to encourage third States to hold Israel's enemies accountable for their continuous attempts to call into question Israel's legitimate right to identify itself as a Jewish state, when international law is clear on its right to do so.

We celebrate those Arab states that have over the decades moved away from a bellicose relationship with Israel, such as Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan, and we call on the Palestinians to follow suit, seeing the opportunities for economic cooperation and development that peace with Israel offers. We call on this COI to seriously ask: Why is this not the goal of the Palestinians? Why do they prefer to focus on fighting with Israel, instead of making peace?

We ask this UN COI to investigate why Palestinians are led by extremists who, instead of leading them to economic prosperity, encourage them to engage in such wasteful acts as the crime of arson of Israeli territory through the use of incendiary balloons¹⁶; the indiscriminate firing of rockets from Gaza into civilian areas in Israel¹⁷; the use of suicide attackers who are celebrated as martyrs and who's families receive salaries for their "sacrifice"¹⁸; and the recruiting of children into the terror network of extremist organisations¹⁹.

We would like to especially submit that the UN member states should, with the support of the UN, critically examine

¹⁶ AP News, September 4, 2021, Hamas operatives launch incendiary balloons into Israel, the Associated Press, <https://apnews.com/article/technology-middle-east-africa-israel-hamas-6538690359c8de18ef78d34139d05535>

¹⁷ BBC News, 12 August 2021, Hamas rocket fire a war crime, Human Rights Watch says, British Broadcasting Corporation, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-58183968>

¹⁸ By Ali Sawafta, JUNE 14, 2017 12:30 PM, *Despite Tillerson reassurance, Palestinians not stopping 'martyr' payments*, Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-attackers-payments-idUSKBN19519Q>

¹⁹ United Nations Watch, 1 February 2021, *Palestinian Child Soldiers, Written statement submitted by United Nations Watch, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status*, https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/AHRC46NGO42_050321.pdf

the actions of Hamas - designated a terrorist organisation by some states²⁰ - in that this organisation, which is the current de facto government of Gaza, facilitates violent acts against the state of Israel, with a particular intent to target the Jewish people.

In our call for fairness, equality and justice, like Israel's leaders we acknowledge the inappropriate use of Judaism as a justification for extremist acts against Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims and Jews²¹. This discredits Israel's peace initiatives, and makes ridiculous Israel's allies in their attempts to fight antisemitism.

2.3 Israel respects religious plurality

Third States should heed the calls of Israel's allies across the world, who warn of the danger that extremist groups, such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, pose to the Jewish people, to Muslims who do not adhere to their distorted view of Islam, and to the holy sites of Christians and Jews in the Holy Land. This was clearly illustrated in the destruction of Joseph's tomb in Shechem/Nablus.

While the UN did not remain silent on the desecration of this site²², which is the heritage of Jews and Christians, the UN still plays into the hands of those who perpetrated that crime by appearing to place a disproportionate amount of the responsibility for this conflict on Israel's shoulders.

For the sake of ensuring the universal respect for international humanitarian law; and the promotion of peace, human fraternity and progress, third States, led by the UN, should see to it that those parties bent on undermining the legitimacy and well-being of Israel, are no longer allowed to harm Israel and all those who call this democratic nation home and the land of their various religions.

2.4 Judge fairly

The Bible says we should judge all people equally, irrespective of poverty or riches²³. However, in this conflict, through the prejudice of some third States, Israel is vilified for effectively defending itself, and Palestinian extremists are excused for their violence because Israel is considered the mightier of the two parties caught in this conflict.

This is a destructive and unholy double standard. This will not solve the conflict and if the UN does not object to this double standard, then the result is to degrade the UN's credibility as a facilitator for mediation.

If peace is to be built on the basis of truth, justice and unity, it is our view that recognition and respect should be given to Israel for the institutions it has built. These institutions can, and have, supported the Palestinian Authority in establishing its own institutions. The development of these institutions will allow the PA to navigate a negotiated settlement with Israel, and for peace to finally prevail in this long and costly conflict.

²⁰ Zachary Laub and Kali Robinson, Last updated August 17, 2021 1:30 pm (EST) What is Hamas?, Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hamas>

²¹ Naftali Bennett, August 7, 2015, *Naftali Bennett on Israel's Jewish Terrorists*, The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/08/opinion/naftali-bennett-on-israels-jewish-terrorists.html>

²² United Nations, 16 October 2015, Condemning Attack on Joseph's Tomb, Secretary-General Urges Respect for Holy Sites, Rejection of Extremists' Bid to Spark Religious Conflict, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sgsm17238.doc.htm>

²³ *Leviticus 19:15*, The Holy Bible: New International Version, Bible Hub, <https://biblehub.com/leviticus/19-15.htm>

2. 5 Sow the seeds of peace and reap prosperity

A lasting peace will progressively bring to an end the poor quality of life of the Palestinian people.

Today, many Palestinians live in poverty and are dependent on international aid. If the UNHRC wishes to see the lives of Palestinians improve, SAFI's view is that instead of wasting resources on this COI, let the time be used to bring Israel and the Palestinians together to negotiate a settlement in good faith, that will result in sustainable peace.

In this peaceful environment, both peoples will be able to realise their potential to create economic prosperity.

Conclusion: We stand with Israel and the Jews

SAFI calls on this COI to investigate the arguments presented in this submission and to include the findings in its June and September 2022 reports. This will be a demonstration that this is indeed an independent commission of inquiry, not a coordinated attack against Israel of the highest order of corruption and hypocrisy, only rivalled by the worst instances of antisemitism in human history, as is the fear of many of Israel's allies.

Let this COI pave the way to a future where the rights of all peoples involved in, and affected by, this conflict are respected, and protected.

South African Friends of Israel declares that we will do all we must to defend Israel and the Jews from unfair criticism and attack. We will stand for human decency and we will stand against antisemitism in all its blatant and subtle forms.

We invite the UN to join us in leading the world into a future where the Jewish people will be embraced as members of the human family and subjected to the same standards and expectations that are placed on all peoples.

We do not seek exceptional treatment for the Jews, nor will we accept that they are held to a higher standard than the rest of humanity. Fairness, security, equality and freedom are all we ask for Israel and the Jews.

Thank you.

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