

House Foreign Affairs Committee,  
*Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations*

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# United Nations' Bigotry Towards Israel:

## UNRWA Anti-semitism Poisons

## Palestinian Youth

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Washington, DC  
November 8, 2023

## Introduction

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Wild, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, on behalf of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The United Nations (UN) was founded nearly 80 years ago in the wake of the decimation of European Jewry, in part, to ensure that such horrors were never repeated. And yet just one month ago, Hamas carried out the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Rather than preventing such atrocities, the UN has enabled them. Anti-Israel bias and anti-Israel policies have spun out of control, undermining the UN's very mission. At the UN today, the world's leading human rights abusers emerge as leaders on human rights. Regimes that deny women's rights masquerade as women's advocates. Multiple agencies have succumbed to endemic corruption. And the prevention or cessation of conflict only seems to matter when Israel tries to defend itself from terrorist attacks. This, in many ways, is the buckling of the U.S.-led world order.

Throughout this testimony, I will highlight the important work of my colleagues at FDD, who have consistently highlighted the dysfunction and dangers of the UN. Our policy prescription can be summed up rather succinctly: the United Nations has failed. Either we undertake significant and meaningful reforms now, or the United States should take steps to dismantle entire agencies that have failed to do their jobs.

## UN Reactions to the October 7 Massacre

Mr. Chairman, the Hamas pogrom that claimed the lives of 1,400 Israelis on October 7 should have been a wakeup call to the United Nations. It wasn't. While UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said "Nothing can justify" the Hamas attacks, in the same breath, he made excuses for them, saying they "did not happen in a vacuum."<sup>1</sup> UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Special Rapporteur on Palestine, Francesca Albanese — whose antisemitic record at the UN has been exhaustively documented by FDD — wrote, "Today's violence must be put in context," blaming it on "Almost six decades of hostile military rule over an entire civilian population."<sup>2</sup>

Such statements, while predictable at this point for the UN, are beyond the pale. No context justifies the slaughter of women, children, and the elderly.

Admittedly, some officials and entities from the UN condemned the October 7 attack. However, none described the perpetrators of the massacre as a terrorist group. Many did not even mention Hamas by name. There's a reason for that: The UN doesn't recognize Hamas as a terrorist organization. Nor does it recognize Hezbollah either. That means UN resources can be and regularly are provided to members of those terrorist groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Antonio Guterres, "Secretary-General's remarks to the Security Council - on the Middle East," *United Nations*, October 24, 2023. (<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2023-10-24/secretary-generals-remarks-the-security-council-the-middle-east%C2%A0>)

<sup>2</sup> David May and Richard Goldberg, "More outrageous UN anti-Semitism: High-level official says Israel to blame for Palestinians murdering Jews," *New York Post*, February 13, 2023. (<https://nypost.com/2023/02/13/high-level-official-says-israel-to-blame-for-palestinians-murdering-jews/>); @FranceskaAlbs, X, October 7, 2023. (<https://twitter.com/FranceskaAlbs/status/1710652725870874874>)

Most UN officials commenting on 10/7 tried to equate Hamas's butchering of innocent civilians and Israel's legitimate military response.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, the UN revealed the extent of its failure.

The United Nations secretary-general, and countless others who work for him, are now calling for a ceasefire. The UN General Assembly (UNGA) passed a resolution on October 27 calling for an immediate ceasefire.<sup>4</sup> While this may sound like a humanitarian gesture, it is a guaranteed recipe for more Hamas violence. Forcing the Israelis to stop now would allow Hamas the time and space to rearm and regroup; the group would be positioned to carry out future massacres, something Hamas leaders have pledged to do.<sup>5</sup>

It is further worth noting here that the UN resolution does not mention Hamas by name, and it calls for establishing "a mechanism to ensure the protection of the Palestinian civilian population." There is no mention of mechanisms to protect the Israeli population, just weeks after the slaughter of 1,400 Israelis.

Bizarrely, the resolution also condemns Israeli efforts to enable Palestinians to leave the warzone temporarily, framing them as the "forced transfer of the Palestinian civilian population." In fact, the Israelis are trying to save lives amidst a grueling war in a densely packed urban environment.

The commissioner-general of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) described Israel's efforts to move the Gaza population to safety as "horrendous."<sup>6</sup> In short, the agency supports and even facilitates Hamas's use of Gazans as human shields rather than supporting an evacuation that would save Palestinian lives in a manner consistent with international law.<sup>7</sup>

## UNRWA

No organization exemplifies the UN's nurturing of Palestinian grievances at the expense of Palestinians better than UNRWA, whose nominal mission is to care for Palestinians displaced by the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. Though every other refugee in the world falls under the jurisdiction of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Palestinians get their own agency.

In the early years, UNRWA treated Palestinians as clients rather than refugees. They refused to settle the Palestinians displaced by the conflict — the conflict that they and the surrounding Arab states initiated. Over time, however, UNRWA began to lose clients. Refugees grew old and passed away. That was when UNRWA expanded the definition of Palestinian refugees to include all descendants of the original male refugees.

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<sup>3</sup> "UN reactions to Hamas massacre and its aftermath — October 2023," *UNWatch*, October 10, 2023. (<https://unwatch.org/un-officials-and-bodies-react-to-october-2023-hamas-massacre-and-its-aftermath>)

<sup>4</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Resolution A/ES-10/L.25, October 27, 2023. (<https://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/emergency10th.shtml>)

<sup>5</sup> @MEMRIReports, *X*, November 1, 2023. (<https://twitter.com/MEMRIReports/status/1719662664090075199>)

<sup>6</sup> UNRWA, Press Release, "Gaza Abyss: Civilians are Dying at the World's Watch," October 13, 2023.

(<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/gaza-abyss-civilians-are-dying-at-the-worlds-watch-unrwa-press-release>)

<sup>7</sup> Michael N. Schmitt, "Israel – Hamas 2023 Symposium – The Evacuation of Northern Gaza: Practical and Legal Aspects," *Articles of War*, October 15, 2023. (<https://lieber.westpoint.edu/evacuation-northern-gaza-practical-legal-aspects>)

As my colleagues Richard Goldberg and Enia Krivine note, UNRWA's refugee tally has ballooned from 700,000 in 1948 to 5.9 million today.<sup>8</sup> This figure includes more than 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, which are not foreign lands, but territories the Palestinians claim for a future state. Moreover, rather than improve the lives of these 5.9 million people through resettlement, UNRWA promotes a fictitious Palestinian right to claim Israeli land. UNRWA has perpetuated conflict through such rhetoric. And by creating new generations of Palestinians who are not refugees but claim refugee status, UNRWA has made the refugee issue an intractable one. The number of Palestinians on the UNRWA roster grows every year.

UNRWA also has blood on its hands. Despite decades of suicide bombings, and thousands of rockets launched indiscriminately at Israeli cities, the agency (along with the rest of the UN), does not recognize Hamas as a terrorist group. The UN body formerly known as the 1267 Committee, now known as the ISIL (Dae'sh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, does not view Hamas (or any other Iranian proxy) as a terrorist group. This has had a direct influence on UNRWA's hiring process.<sup>9</sup> The agency has over 30,000 employees. UNRWA doesn't screen them for ties to terrorist groups, meaning that many employees are members of or affiliated with Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, or other violent groups.<sup>10</sup> As far as UNRWA is concerned, Hamas affiliation is a political label, not a terror red flag.

Congress has raised concerns about an UNRWA school headmaster moonlighting as a terrorist.<sup>11</sup> His story is just one of dozens that have been reported over the years. UNRWA employees have promoted antisemitism online, including praise of Hitler.<sup>12</sup> This is not a case of a few rotten apples but rather an agency that openly promotes hatred and violence while masquerading as a humanitarian body. There was no other way to interpret UNRWA's positions after January 2021, when the agency's secretary-general acknowledged that UNRWA's official educational curricula refer to Israel as the "enemy," teach math by counting "martyred" terrorists, and include the phrase "Jihad is one of the doors to Paradise" in grammar lessons.<sup>13</sup>

UNRWA's problems are not confined to Gaza. The same story plays out in the West Bank and Lebanon where so-called refugee camps become terror bases of operations.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Richard Goldberg and Jonathan Schanzer, "The U.N. Refugee Agency With Few Actual Refugees," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 3, 2021. (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-u-n-refugee-agency-with-few-actual-refugees-11612378415>); "Where We Work," *UNRWA*, accessed November 5, 2023. (<https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work>)

<sup>9</sup> Julia Schulman and Richard Goldberg, "Congress Needs to Review UN Agency's Terror Finance Problem," *Newsweek*, April 29, 2021. (<https://www.newsweek.com/congress-needs-review-un-agencys-terror-finance-problem-opinion-1587099>)

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Schanzer and Richard Goldberg, "Congress must fix UNRWA's Hamas problem," *Washington Examiner*, July 31, 2021. (<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/congress-must-fix-unrwas-hamas-problem>)

<sup>11</sup> Adam Entous, "Gaza headmaster was Islamic Jihad 'rocket-maker,'" *Reuters*, May 5, 2008. (<https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-33413620080505>); Ilan Ben Zion, "Rockets found in UNRWA School, for third time," *The Times of Israel* (Israel), July 30, 2014. (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/rockets-found-in-unrwa-school-for-third-time>); "UN admits Palestinians fired rockets from UNRWA schools," *UN Watch*, April 7, 2015. (<https://unwatch.org/un-admits-palestinians-fired-rockets-unrwa-schools>); "Report: UNRWA violations regulations," *The Jerusalem Post* (Israel), September 28, 2006. (<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/report-unrwa-violating-regulations>)

<sup>12</sup> "Report: UNRWA teachers incite Jihadist terrorism & antisemitism," *UN Watch*, February 7, 2017. (<https://unwatch.org/130-page-report-unrwa-teachers-incite-terrorism-antisemitism>)

<sup>13</sup> Melissa Weiss, "UN agency head admits to printing 'inappropriate' content in Palestinian classroom materials," *Jewish Insider*, January 14, 2021. (<https://jewishinsider.com/2021/01/unrwa-textbooks-gaza-west-bank>)

<sup>14</sup> Richard Goldberg and David May, "Don't give more money to the UN's failed Palestinian refugee agency," *The Hill*, September 12, 2023. (<https://thehill.com/opinion/4197917-dont-give-more-money-to-the-uns-failed-palestinian-refugee-agency>)

Unlike many UN agencies to which the United States contributes, UNRWA has no board of directors to conduct oversight and steer the organization.<sup>15</sup> This has contributed to corruption and inefficiency. UNRWA maintains a staff of over 13,000 just in Gaza to serve the territory's 2.2 million Palestinians.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, the UNHCR serves more than nearly 90 million people worldwide with under 19,000 staff members.<sup>17</sup>

Criticizing UNRWA need not ignore the needs of destitute Palestinians or the intentions of well-meaning relief workers — some of whom have died during the current war. If the agency would simply acknowledge its problems, reform could be possible. However, the group appears content to play by Hamas's rules. In 2021, after UNRWA employee Matthias Schmale, the head of UNRWA's operations in Gaza, gave an interview calling Israeli military strikes "precise" and "sophisticated," he was compelled to leave the territory.<sup>18</sup> Just a few weeks ago, on October 15, UNRWA posted on social media that "a group of people with trucks purporting to be from the Ministry of Health," run by Hamas, "removed fuel and medical equipment from the Agency's compound." UNRWA quickly deleted this post.<sup>19</sup>

### The UN's Web of Bodies Dedicated to Harming Israel

Beyond UNRWA, the UN maintains a roster of organs and committees dedicating to validating Palestinian grievances and maligning the Jewish state. My colleague David May has done groundbreaking work on this constellation of UN agencies.<sup>20</sup>

In 1968, the year after Israel fought a six-day, pre-emptive war to preserve its existence, the UN General Assembly created the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. The committee's mandate is solely to investigate alleged Israeli abuses, and it produces annual reports cataloguing them.<sup>21</sup> This effort, which continues to this day, is part of a broader UN effort to label Israel as the aggressor when it defends itself.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Goldberg, "A Better Blueprint for International Organizations: United Nations Relief and Works Agency," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, June 30, 2021. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2021/06/30/united-nations-relief-and-works-agency>)

<sup>16</sup> "Where We Work: Gaza Strip," *UNRWA*, accessed November 5, 2023. (<https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/gaza-strip>)

<sup>17</sup> "Meet our people," *UNHCR*, accessed November 5, 2023. (<https://www.unhcr.org/us/get-involved/work-us/careers-unhcr/meet-our-people>);

"Who we protect," *UNHCR*, accessed November 5, 2023. (<https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/who-we-protect>)

<sup>18</sup> "UNRWA Gaza chief recalled after uproar over claim that IDF strikes 'precise,'" *The Times of Israel* (Israel), June 2, 2021.

(<https://www.timesofisrael.com/unrwa-gaza-chief-recalled-after-uproar-over-claim-that-idf-strikes-precise>)

<sup>19</sup> @BarakRavid, X, October 16, 2023. (<https://twitter.com/BarakRavid/status/1713915954759889300>)

<sup>20</sup> David May, "A Better Blueprint for International Organizations: Palestinian Organizations at the United Nations," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, June 30, 2021. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2021/06/30/palestinian-organizations-at-the-united-nations>)

<sup>21</sup> UN Information System on the Question of Palestine, "Documents Archive," accessed March 26, 2021.

([https://www.un.org/unispal/documents/?wpv-wpcf-document-date\\_min-format=d-m-y&wpv-wpcf-document-date\\_max-format=d-m-y&wpv\\_view\\_count=4164&wpv\\_post\\_search=&wpv-wpcf-document-date\\_min=&wpv-wpcf-document-date\\_min-format=d-m-y&wpv-wpcf-document-date\\_max=&wpv-wpcf-document-date\\_max-format=d-m-y&wpv\\_sort\\_order=desc&wpv-document-source%5B%5D=special-committee-to-investigate-israeli-practices&wpv-wpcf-document-symbol=](https://www.un.org/unispal/documents/?wpv-wpcf-document-date_min-format=d-m-y&wpv-wpcf-document-date_max-format=d-m-y&wpv_view_count=4164&wpv_post_search=&wpv-wpcf-document-date_min=&wpv-wpcf-document-date_min-format=d-m-y&wpv-wpcf-document-date_max=&wpv-wpcf-document-date_max-format=d-m-y&wpv_sort_order=desc&wpv-document-source%5B%5D=special-committee-to-investigate-israeli-practices&wpv-wpcf-document-symbol=)); UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories," A/70/406, October 5, 2015. (<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-188822>). The committee's name reflects its mandate, which is to "investigate Israeli practices," making Israel the target of the committee.

The committee's reports include wild claims that Israel requisitions Palestinian homes by placing ancient Hebrew coins in them to falsely claim Jewish heritage or that Israeli excavations undermine the structural foundations of the al-Aqsa Mosque.<sup>22</sup>

It doesn't end there. In 1977, the UNGA created the Division for Palestinian Rights (UNDP) to oversee the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), created in 1975. No such body exists for Israelis or for any other people in the world, for that matter. It continues to echo the Palestinian narrative, which is more focused on maligning Israel than building toward Palestinian independence in the West Bank and Gaza.

The UNDP oversees the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), a propaganda arm dedicated to promoting the Palestinian agenda. The committee also oversees the "International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People." Speakers at solidarity day events have promoted blood libels against Israel; compared Israel's actions to those of the Nazis; and advocated a "free Palestine from the river to the sea."<sup>23</sup> This call to ethnically cleanse Israel, a motto of Hamas, has been increasingly popular in the weeks following the 10/7 slaughter.

### Anti-Israel Bias Throughout the UN

Palestinian-specific bodies are not the only UN entities promoting the Palestinian agenda. My colleagues Orde Kittrie, Richard Goldberg, and David May have done important research in this space.

The UN Human Rights Council, a body dominated by dictatorships, regularly attacks Israel for defending itself. The UNHRC has passed as many resolutions against Israel as the rest of the world combined, and it has a blacklist of companies operating in Israeli-controlled, disputed territories.<sup>24</sup> No other list exists for any other disputed territory in the world. This is a clear double standard.

These are all examples of antisemitism according to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Thirty-six countries, including the United States and the European Union, endorse IHRA's working definition.<sup>25</sup> IHRA's examples of antisemitism include: "claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor," "Applying double standards" to Israel, and comparing Israel to Nazi Germany. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has praised the

<sup>22</sup> UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories," A/70/406, October 5, 2015. (<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-188822>)

<sup>23</sup> "UN's Virtual Palestinian Exhibit Distorts Facts," *UNWatch*, December 16, 2020. (<https://unwatch.org/un-virtual-palestinian-exhibit-distorts-facts>); "UN Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, November 30, 2009," *Human Rights Voices*, accessed November 5, 2023. ([https://www.humanrightsvoices.org/solidarity-day-2009/un-day-of-solidarity-with-the-palestinian-people-november-30-2009/?type\\_overview=1](https://www.humanrightsvoices.org/solidarity-day-2009/un-day-of-solidarity-with-the-palestinian-people-november-30-2009/?type_overview=1)); "CNN fires commentator after he calls for 'free Palestine from river to the sea,'" *The Times of Israel* (Israel), November 29, 2018. (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/at-un-cnn-commentator-calls-for-a-free-palestine-from-the-river-to-the-sea>)

<sup>24</sup> David May and Richard Goldberg, "How to Keep Antisemitism Away From Turtle Bay," *The Algemeiner*, March 21, 2023. (<https://www.algemeiner.com/2023/03/21/how-to-keep-antisemitism-away-from-turtle-bay>)

<sup>25</sup> "Switzerland adopts IHRA definition of antisemitism," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, June 5, 2021. (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/switzerland-adopts-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism>)

IHRA definition. So have former UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Ahmed Shaheed, and the UN's lead in monitoring antisemitism, Miguel Moratinos.<sup>26</sup>

Consistent with its Israel obsession, the UNHRC has launched multiple commissions of inquiry (COIs) to investigate alleged Israeli crimes. One was launched after Hamas instigated a war in 2014, kidnapping and murdering three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank. The UNHRC launched a commission of inquiry to investigate possible Israeli war crimes when the country responded.<sup>27</sup> This framing reflects the UN's continued commitment to whitewash Palestinian war crimes and violations of human rights while denying Israel's right to defend itself. An even more insidious commission was established in 2021 with a mandate that never sunsets.<sup>28</sup>

The UNHRC also appointed a rapporteur devoted exclusively to investigating potential Israeli crimes. It is the only UNHRC special rapporteur with an open-ended mandate with no fixed duration.<sup>29</sup> Many of these rapporteurs have been embroiled in antisemitism controversies.<sup>30</sup> But none compares to the dystopian rhetoric of the current rapporteur, Francesca Albanese.

In February 2023, Albanese blamed Israel for a Palestinian terrorist attack that left six Israelis and one Ukrainian dead.<sup>31</sup> In July, Albanese released a report in which she dismissed Israeli security needs, called for punitive actions against Israel, and justified terrorism against Israelis. Her report won the praise of Hamas.<sup>32</sup> Albanese wrote that Palestinians "continuously rebel against their prison wardens." Albanese recently justified Hamas's October 7 pogrom that cut down 1,400 Israelis in cold blood, framing it as a response to Israeli "aggression."

Albanese should never have been given her current post. In 2014, she described the United States as "subjugated by the Jewish lobby."<sup>33</sup> Top U.S. officials recently condemned these remarks.<sup>34</sup> Separately that year, Albanese claimed that the "Israeli lobby," directed by "Israel's greed," skewed media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Albanese has also compared Israel to

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Secretary-General, Press Release, "Anti-Semitism Rising Even in Countries with No Jews at All, Secretary-General Tells Event on Power of Education to Counter Racism, Discrimination," September 26, 2018. (<https://press.un.org/en/2018/sgsm19252.doc.htm>); Ahmed Shaheed, "Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance," *United Nations*, September 20, 2019.

(<https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2F74%2F358&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>); Miguel Moratinos, "Remarks by Mr. Miguel Moratinos the High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations at the High-Level Side Event on The Role of the United Nations in Combatting Anti-Semitism," November 17, 2020. (<https://www.unaoc.org/2020/11/message-the-role-of-the-un-in-combatting-anti-semitism>)

<sup>27</sup> "The United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict," *United Nations Human Rights Council*, accessed November 5, 2023. (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/co-i-gaza-conflict/commission-of-inquiry>)

<sup>28</sup> Richard Goldberg and Orde Kittrie, "US rejoining UN Human Rights Council; what it should do first," *The Hill*, October 16, 2021. (<https://thehill.com/opinion/international/577044-us-rejoining-un-human-rights-council-what-it-should-do-first>)

<sup>29</sup> "Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967," *United Nations Human Rights*, accessed November 5, 2023. (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-palestine>)

<sup>30</sup> David May, "At the United Nations, Israel is 'the Jew Among the Nations,'" *The Algemeiner*, January 13, 2023. (<https://www.algemeiner.com/2023/01/13/at-the-united-nations-israel-is-the-jew-among-the-nations>)

<sup>31</sup> David May and Richard Goldberg, "More outrageous UN anti-Semitism: High-level official says Israel to blame for Palestinians murdering Jews," *New York Post*, February 13, 2023. (<https://nypost.com/2023/02/13/high-level-official-says-israel-to-blame-for-palestinians-murdering-jews/>)

<sup>32</sup> David May, "UNHRC Special Rapporteur Report Justifies Terrorism, Ignores Israeli Security Needs," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, July 17, 2023. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/07/17/unhrc-special-rapporteur-report-justifies-terrorism-ignores-israeli-security-needs>)

<sup>33</sup> Luke Tress, "UN Palestinian rights official's social media history reveals antisemitic comments," *The Times of Israel* (Israel), December 14, 2022. (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-palestinian-rights-officials-social-media-history-reveals-antisemitic-comments/>)

<sup>34</sup> @USAmbHRC, X, December 14, 2022. (<https://twitter.com/usambhrc/status/1603091256082563075>); @StateSEAS, X, December 14, 2022. (<https://twitter.com/StateSEAS/status/1603160247417405441>)

the Nazis, declared Israel to be a racist endeavor, and repeatedly voiced opposition to the IHRA working definition of antisemitism.<sup>35</sup>

Another opponent of the IHRA definition is Craig Mokhiber, who until recently worked for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which oversees the UN Human Rights Council.<sup>36</sup> In a letter last month announcing his retirement, Mokhiber called Israel's operations against Hamas "a text-book case of genocide" and called Israel a "European, ethno-nationalist, settler colonial project in Palestine."<sup>37</sup> This is consistent with his rhetoric over the years.<sup>38</sup> Not coincidentally, Mokhiber has called accusations of antisemitism among anti-Israel activists to be "a tired old trick" that obscures "the real struggle against antisemitism."<sup>39</sup>

## The World Health Organization

The UN's disproportionate focus on Israel also impacts the priorities of agencies that have more urgent business. The World Health Organization (WHO), for example, singles out Israel for scrutiny at its annual conferences, a practice it began in 1968.<sup>40</sup> Even at the height of the pandemic, the agency dedicated a full day of its eight-day conference to bashing Israel. I refer you to the work of my colleagues Anthony Ruggiero, Richard Goldberg, David May, and others on this important topic.<sup>41</sup>

During the current hostilities, the WHO has emphasized the danger the fighting has posed to Palestinian healthcare facilities, but it hasn't criticized Hamas for using those facilities as human shields. Nor has the WHO commented on Hamas's reported use of ambulances to ferry its fighters and weapons, as has been widely reported during the current conflict.<sup>42</sup> It's interesting to note, however, the extent to which the aforementioned Albanese parroted Hamas talking points surrounding the al-Ahli hospital bombing,<sup>43</sup> which was the result of an errant rocket fired by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Albanese has not retracted her comments blaming Israel for this incident. And the WHO has not weighed in, either.

It is now known that Hamas maintains its primary military command center beneath Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest and most important medical facility. *The Washington Post* has called

<sup>35</sup> @HillelNeuer, X, January 19, 2022. (<https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1483945150925651969>); @FranceskAlb, X, May 14, 2021. (<https://twitter.com/FranceskAlb/status/1393198044343013377>); @FranceskAlbs, X, November 3, 2022. (<https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1588180548081549314>)

<sup>36</sup> @CraigMokhiber, X, November 17, 2022. (<https://twitter.com/CraigMokhiber/status/1593380387585200130>)

<sup>37</sup> "Text-Book Case of Genocide": Top U.N. Official Craig Mokhiber Resigns, Denounces Israeli Assault on Gaza," *Democracy Now*, November 1, 2023. ([https://www.democracynow.org/2023/11/1/craig\\_mokhiber\\_un\\_resignation\\_israel\\_gaza](https://www.democracynow.org/2023/11/1/craig_mokhiber_un_resignation_israel_gaza))

<sup>38</sup> David May and Richard Goldberg, "How to Keep Antisemitism Away From Turtle Bay," *The Algemeiner*, March 21, 2023. (<https://www.algemeiner.com/2023/03/21/how-to-keep-antisemitism-away-from-turtle-bay/>); @CraigMokhiber, X, May 15, 2021. (<https://twitter.com/CraigMokhiber/status/1393573919722983425>); @CraigMokhiber, X, February 26, 2023. (<https://twitter.com/CraigMokhiber/status/1629996613140721664>); @CraigMokhiber, X, May 15, 2020. (<https://twitter.com/CraigMokhiber/status/1261301126449827843>); @CraigMokhiber, X, May 13, 2021. (<https://twitter.com/CraigMokhiber/status/1392901656157765637>); @CraigMokhiber, X, July 4, 2022. (<https://twitter.com/CraigMokhiber/status/1544037231744225282>)

<sup>39</sup> @CraigMokhiber, X, February 28, 2023. (<https://twitter.com/CraigMokhiber/status/1630682380909379586>)

<sup>40</sup> David May, "End the WHO's Unhealthy Obsession With Israel," *The National Interest*, May 21, 2022. (<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/end-who%E2%80%99s-unhealthy-obsession-israel-202527>)

<sup>41</sup> Craig Singleton, David May, and David Adesnik, "A Better Blueprint for International Organizations: World Health Organization," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, June 30, 2021. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2021/06/30/world-health-organization>)

<sup>42</sup> "Israeli military says hit an ambulance being used by Hamas," *Reuters*, November 3, 2023. (<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-military-says-hit-an-ambulance-being-used-by-hamas-2023-11-03>)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/gaza-un-experts-decry-bombing-hospitals-and-schools-crimes-against-humanity>



Shifa Hamas's "de facto headquarters."<sup>44</sup> In previous conflicts, Hamas fired rockets from within the vicinity of the hospital and nearby and executed rivals receiving care at the facility. The group makes similar use of other hospitals. This is an unequivocal war crime, as my colleague Orde Kittrie has explained.<sup>45</sup> It is also key to Hamas's strategy, which is to exploit Israel's unilateral commitment to respecting the laws of war while weaponizing outrage over the civilian casualties caused by Hamas's use of human shields. The WHO has chosen to ignore this problem, revealing a bias that can no longer be ignored.

## UNIFIL

While Washington is understandably focused on the Gaza front, another battle could erupt on Israel's northern border with the Lebanese Hezbollah. The Iran-backed group currently possesses an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 rockets. The group also possesses hundreds of precision-guided munitions (PGMs), which is the first time such lethal weapons have been wielded by a non-state actor. Hezbollah also has hundreds of deadly drones in its arsenal.

For the purposes of our discussion, it is important to ask: how was Hezbollah able to acquire so much weaponry? My colleague David Daoud has done important work on this subject.

The UN International Forces in Lebanon was established in the late 1970s to prevent such a scenario. UN Security Council Resolution 1701, issued after the last round of conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006, was designed to further clarify and reinforce this important mission of preventing nonstate actors such as Hezbollah from acquiring military capabilities now on full display. The Iran-backed group continues to fire anti-tank missiles at Israel every day without a word from the United Nations. It is further important to note that the group has built all across the border with Israel, without a word from the UN. A U.S. Treasury designation of "Green Without Borders" exposed the extent to which Hezbollah wielded a nonprofit front entity to build military outposts across Israel's northern frontier. Meanwhile, the Lebanese Armed Forces, an army funded by the American taxpayer, has done nothing to halt any of this.

The uselessness of UNIFIL is on full display.<sup>46</sup> There is a legitimate discussion to be had about whether the UN simply failed or whether it actively enabled the crisis that is rapidly unfolding on Israel's northern border. Either way, it is time for the United States to actively consider defunding and dismantling UNIFIL. Something else can be stood up to take its place if a mechanism for continued dialogue between Israel and representatives of the Hezbollah-dominated Lebanese state is needed.

## Recommendations

The Orwellian focus of the United Nations on Israel has not only diverted important resources from other problems around the world, it has undermined the basic functions of the multilateral

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<sup>44</sup> William Booth, "While Israel held its fire, the militant group Hamas did not," *The Washington Post*, July 15, 2014. ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/while-israel-held-its-fire-the-militant-group-hamas-did-not/2014/07/15/116fd3d7-3c0f-4413-94a9-2ab16af1445d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/while-israel-held-its-fire-the-militant-group-hamas-did-not/2014/07/15/116fd3d7-3c0f-4413-94a9-2ab16af1445d_story.html))

<sup>45</sup> Orde Kittrie, "Hold Hamas Accountable for Human-Shields Use During the May 2021 Gaza War," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, June 23, 2021. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2021/06/23/hold-hamas-accountable-for-human-shields-use-during-the-may-2021-gaza-war>)

<sup>46</sup> Tony Badran, "A Better Blueprint for International Organizations: United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, June 30, 2021. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2021/06/30/united-nations-interim-force-in-lebanon>)

body that was designed to protect the U.S.-led world order. Either the UN begins to reform itself or it should be dismantled. My FDD colleagues and I recommend the following:

1. Overhaul UNRWA to ensure an accountable and transparent organization. Any further U.S. funding should be contingent upon:
  - a) Establishing an impartial board of directors capable of conducting effective oversight of operations.
  - b) Undertaking a full screening of UNRWA employees, contractors, and beneficiaries for terrorist affiliation.
  - c) Overhaul all educational material to remove antisemitism and incitement against Israel and replace it with a U.S.-supervised curriculum that promotes tolerance.
  - d) Apply refugee status only to individuals who fled their homes in 1948-1949.
  - e) Establish a clear plan for the phasing out of UNRWA and passing any legitimate refugee claims to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.
2. The UN Security Council should add Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations to its list of sanctioned entities and individuals.<sup>47</sup> The same should be applied to Hezbollah, the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and other Shi'ite militias sponsored by the Islamic Republic in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. If China or Russia object, U.S. taxpayers will have further evidence that their money is being abused.
3. The UN should dismantle the Special Committee, CEIRPP, UNISPAL, and other bodies that serve as Palestinian propaganda vehicles. Any agency dealing with the Palestinian cause should prioritize counter-radicalization and co-existence. U.S. funding should be contingent on such changes.
4. Establish the IHRA definition of antisemitism as the standard for all UN bodies. This should include the removal of any UN official who issues statements that are antisemitic, with a focus on those that embrace a double standard toward Israel, as defined by the IHRA. This should also prohibit agencies like the WHO from applying double standards to Israel, thus eliminating standing agenda items that only focus on criticizing Israel.
5. Reform the selection process at the Human Rights Council to block the worst violators of human rights from sitting in judgment of Israel or any other democratic country. Iran was recently the chair of the UNHRC social reform session. This cannot be allowed to continue.<sup>48</sup> Ballots for selecting council members should be open, not closed, so member states cannot conceal votes cast for repressive dictatorships. Human Rights Council mandates of all one-sided commissions of inquiry and special rapporteurs should be terminated. Washington should demand the removal of the standing agenda item that subjects Israel to perpetual discrimination. Absent these reforms, the U.S. must cease participation and support.

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<sup>47</sup> "Sanctions," *United Nations Security Council*, accessed November 5, 2023. (<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/information>)

<sup>48</sup> Emma Farge, "Iran's appointment to chair UN rights meeting draws condemnation," *Reuters*, November 2, 2023. (<https://www.reuters.com/world/irans-appointment-chair-un-rights-meeting-draws-condemnation-2023-11-02>)

6. Dismantle UNIFIL. Another organization might be formed to take its place in order to facilitate dialogue between Israel and the Hezbollah-dominated Lebanese state. But this peacekeeping agency has failed to keep the peace. It may have even guaranteed war.

I would be happy to answer any questions you have on the topics explored above. On behalf of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, thank you for the opportunity to testify.