

Durban's enduring dangers

written by David M. Weinberg | 27.09.2026

Apparently, there wasn't enough Israel bashing at the United Nations this week, from French President Emmanuel Macron to Jordan's King Abdullah and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan. Therefore, that cesspool of antisemitism and anti-Zionism has scheduled another hatefest for next week to mark the 25th anniversary of the infamous, rancid Durban conference.

The 2001 "World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance" in Durban, South Africa, unleashed a torrent of visceral anti-Zionism, raw antisemitism, and rank anti-Americanism that has since escalated to unhinged heights.

The myths of Israel as a genocidal and apartheid actor – the Jewish state as the source and cause of every evil in the modern world – were birthed then and there, as were the now-ubiquitous Orwellian campaigns of international lawfare against Israel.

Grotesque is the calmest term I can summon to describe the General Assembly's planned "celebration" on Monday of this metastasizing monstrous movement.

Since then, the UN has built a sprawling network of more than 30 bodies, investigative mechanisms, offices, commissions, committees, special procedures, and special rapporteurs that contribute to the political, economic, and legal campaigns against Israel – as mapped out in a massive new report by my colleagues at the Jerusalem-based Misgav Institute for National Security & Zionist Strategy.

"The UN's Anti-Israel Ecosystem: Mapping the Institutions, Mechanisms, and Resources Behind the Campaign Against Israel" by Dr. Adi Schwartz, Asher Fredman, and Noam Yakoby (165 pp.) shows how these structures result in a self-reinforcing echo chamber in which ostensibly independent bodies repeatedly validate and amplify one another's "findings" and conclusions – which are invariably anti-Israel and antisemitic.

The UN's highly resourced Israel-focused machinery manufactures wild claims and statistics about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict based on Arab sources hostile

to Israel. These claims are backed by near-automatic voting majorities dominated by Islamic countries, China, and Russia; they then circulate from body to body across the UN system, acquire the authority of technical or professional expertise, and are then cited by governments, journalists, NGOs, courts, and other UN bodies.

The result is an insular institutional and ideological bubble that is ferociously devoted to delegitimizing and criminalizing Israel.

The machinery increasingly produces concrete political, economic, and legal pressure. Human Rights Council and OHCHR mechanisms have generated corporate blacklists and calls for arms restrictions. Special Rapporteurs have promoted sanctions, boycotts, asset freezes, and pressure on private actors. General Assembly initiatives have generated proceedings before the International Court of Justice, whose conclusions are then used to justify further measures. While the International Criminal Court is not a UN body, UN decisions helped create the pathway for Palestinian accession, while UN-generated claims and findings shape the wider environment surrounding its cases.

The authors argue that the danger extends far beyond Israel. The anti-Israel machinery generates legal theories, investigative practices, open-ended commissions, Special Rapporteur mandates, corporate blacklists, arms-embargo campaigns, sanctions proposals, and international criminal proceedings that can establish precedents for use against other democratic states.

Methods developed against Israel can and certainly will later be leveraged against democracies conducting counterterrorism operations or confronting terrorist organizations embedded among civilians. They can expose democratic officials and soldiers to politicized legal proceedings, pressure companies that supply democratic militaries, and delegitimize essential national-security tools.

WHAT CAN BE done about this? The authors outline eight courses of action, most of which relate to reducing funding for bodies that discriminate against Israel, the US, and other Western countries or undermine Western values.

After all, democratic governments and their taxpayers provide a disproportionate share of the resources that sustain the UN system. It makes no sense that democracies finance institutions that authoritarian and anti-Western blocs use to undermine democratic allies and advance norms those same democracies often

oppose.

The amounts of money involved are staggering. In 2024, the US, Germany, UK, Japan, Canada, and France together provided 60% of all direct government contributions to the UN system; the US alone contributed more than 183 other member states combined. Researchers like Prof. Eugene Kontorovich and the late Claudia Rosett have shown that the US government provides more than \$20 billion to the UN and related international organizations and multilateral entities – many of which are pugnaciously anti-American and radically woke in addition to rabidly anti-Israel.

The Trump administration started off in the right direction by ending US funding for UNRWA (the forever refugee agency for Palestinians), by reducing funding for the Human Rights Council, UNESCO, and dozens of other international organizations, and by seeking to punish and roll back the ICC.

But since then, the administration nonsensically has nevertheless transferred hundreds of millions of dollars to the UN and paid down hundreds of millions more in accumulated UN obligations, while boasting about paltry reforms and modest efforts to streamline UN waste. This includes payment this month of \$827 million for the regular UN budget and for peacekeeping, and a commitment of \$3.8 billion in US support for UN humanitarian programs.

And countries like Canada slavishly pour more money into UNRWA and the ICC and the “Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People” etc., no matter what – whether there are “reforms” and “audits” or not – whether to spite Israel and/or to purportedly prop up the two-state “solution.”

All the while, Britain, Canada, and France prattle on incessantly about “settler violence,” when the far, far more rampant violence is Palestinian terrorism against Israelis. See the shooting death of Netanel Shukron on the eve of Yom Kippur and the car-ramming attack on Neria Leiter on Wednesday. If any world leader emitted more than an imperceptible “tsk-tsk” about this terrorism, I missed it.

PERSONALLY, I doubt the eight reforms proposed by the Misgav Institute are implementable. I do not believe that the UN can be reformed. It operates with no real accountability, no functional moral compass, and no mechanism for acquiring any such vital features. It has developed a tyrant-friendly, diplomatically immune,

and collectively irresponsible DNA.

Worse still, as Melanie Phillips has written, it is an “unstoppable geyser of moral and intellectual corruption. It teaches the West that lies about Israel are truths and truths are lies, and it has turned what the West tells itself is morality and conscience into an agenda of evil.”

It has ensured that the West can no longer distinguish more generally between victim and oppressor, reality and propaganda, right and wrong. Treating the UN and the “international law” it has promoted as the moral arbiters of global order is not just a sick joke. It has made the world sick, too.

Therefore, I argue that defunding the UN altogether may be warranted, at least for a while – as prophylactic treatment. It is pretty much taboo to call for shutdown of the UN, but it should not be so. I don’t buy the argument that while the UN may be imperfect, “it’s all we’ve got” – a refrain that tends to be accompanied by prescriptions for reforms that either won’t stick or won’t work at all.

Is the UN really the best we can do? No, it is not.

Do we have to settle for a system that elects Syria and Saudi Arabia to lead human rights councils, women’s rights agencies, and cultural bodies; and that cavalierly disregards slaughters in Syria, Sudan, Iran, and China while outrageously branding Israel a war criminal enterprise?

No, we should not have to. Time to chuck the travesty and start over.

Claudia Rosett’s important book *What to Do About the UN* argues that the guiding principle for replacing the UN is competition, the establishment of professional agencies with no grandiose moral pretensions.

Competition is what takes down monopolies, and the UN is the biggest monopoly of them all. It is a mammoth institution helped along by immunities, privileges, and lavish government contributions, and backed by legions of special-interest NGOs around the globe that lobby for more.

As a result, the UN has become like the failed collectivist experiments of the 20th century – the huge old Soviet state enterprises and gargantuan Chinese communist industries. It was and is extremely hard to shutter these behemoths

since they are tied to every aspect of a dysfunctional economy and into the lives of their employees. They are a terrible drain.

You fix this by creating competition. So, Rosett proposed the establishment of coalitions that are not so much pegged to ideals as mission-driven, bringing together countries with specific shared interests - like NATO during the Cold War.

Thinkers and experts need to apply themselves diligently to this task. It is time for those with the expertise, resources, and genuine goodwill toward future generations to take an in-depth and non-polemical look at the opportunity cost to the West (not to mention Israel and the Jewish People) of cleaving to the UN.

We are way past the kumbaya rhetoric surrounding the founding of the UN 80 years ago. We are deep into the disastrous damage to global sanity and security unleashed by the abysmal Durban conference 25 years ago and everything ugly that has transpired since.

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