



Human Rights Watch did a one-sided takedown of Israel

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'Israeli authorities do face legitimate security challenges,' Human Rights Watch acknowledged after accusing Israel of committing two "crimes against humanity" – apartheid and persecution – against Palestinians.

It was a grudging, and altogether disingenuous, admission in a new 217-page report about Israeli actions in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem that ignores history and belies reality, all to paint a strikingly one-sided picture of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The admission, in fact, seems designed to present a facade of balance in a report that is anything but. In describing Israeli behavior, over the course of decades and today, the report all but ignores the very same "legitimate security challenges," thus painting a picture of gratuitous Israeli oppression.

Moreover, the report comes as Palestinian leaders in the West Bank and Gaza erect more barriers to peace with Israel, and as they themselves degrade the human rights of the Palestinian people. But you'd never know that from the tone of the report, or from what it includes and what it leaves out.

"Israel," the report declares, "has maintained military rule over some portion of the Palestinian population for all but six months of its 73-year history." Nowhere does the report note that Palestinian leaders have rejected multiple offers of a state since 1947, or that most Palestinians oppose the very notion of an Israel that occupies any land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

"The report does not set out to compare Israel with South Africa under apartheid or to determine whether Israel is an 'apartheid state,'" it says. Nevertheless, the report volunteers that some Israeli, Palestinian, US and European officials, "prominent media commentators," and others use the term "in a descriptive or comparative, non-legal sense" to conclude that Israeli action amounts to apartheid or that it eventually will. How convenient.

"Since 2008," the report states, "the Israeli army has launched three large-scale military offensives in Gaza in the context of hostilities with armed Palestinian groups," referring to the Israeli military operations of 2008, 2012 and 2014. Nowhere does it explain, however, that the terrorists of Hamas, which has run Gaza since seizing it in a violent coup in 2007, or other terrorist groups that operate in Gaza, triggered each of those offensives with rocket fire or other attacks on Israel.

"ISRAELI FORCES," the report states, "have regularly fired on Palestinian demonstrators and others who have approached fences separating Gaza and Israel in circumstances when they did not pose an imminent threat to life, killing 214 demonstrators in 2018 and 2019 alone and maiming thousands." Nowhere does it explain, however, that rather than peaceful protests, Hamas orchestrated violent attacks along the border, with protesters throwing Molotov cocktails and burning tires and with Hamas paying protesters who were wounded and paying even more to the families of protesters who were killed.

That this new report from such a high-profile nonprofit, bemoaning the absence of Israeli-Palestinian peace and denouncing Israeli human rights abuses against Palestinians, appears now is more than a little ironic when one takes even a cursory look at recent developments on the Palestinian side.

Mahmoud Abbas, who was elected in 2005 to a four-year term as president of the Palestinian Authority, which runs the West Bank, has refused to cede power ever since. After calling for elections this spring, he just canceled them out of fears that Hamas would win the parliamentary elections and perhaps even the presidency.

While refusing to give Palestinians the right to choose their leaders, the PA continues to celebrate terrorism against Israelis. On PA TV recently, a host greeted "one of the outstanding people of our nation" – terrorist Rushdi Abu Mokh, who had just completed a 35-year sentence for murdering an Israeli soldier – with "pride, glory, dignity and elation, but with humility as well.

"In March, a top Abbas adviser nonsensically told Palestine TV that Theodor Herzl, founder of the modern Zionist movement, said of those in Palestine in the early 20th century, "We must exterminate them. We must throw them in the deserts or in the jungles of Africa, and let wild beasts devour them."

Nor have the terrorists of Hamas, who rule Gaza with an even harsher hand, moderated their views. In late April, Khaled Mash'al, who runs the Hamas Diaspora Office, told Al-Aqsa TV that those who "normalize" relations with Israel have "lost their conscience and their sensibility" and amount to "worthless scum."

So, across the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian leaders severely restrict the rights of Palestinians while nourishing the anti-Israeli hatred on the ground that, more than anything else, makes Israeli-Palestinian peace elusive.

Not that anyone would learn any of that by reading this shockingly one-sided report of Human Rights Watch.