



Human Rights Hypocrisy

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Seventy years ago today, with the Holocaust still fresh in the minds of global leaders, the United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to partition Palestine in two, with the goal of establishing one state for Jews to reclaim their historic homeland and another for the Arabs who were also living there.

So, one must wonder what those global leaders would think of today's United Nations - which operates a single-minded campaign of opprobrium against Israel for its alleged human rights transgressions against Palestinians, but which largely ignores the far more serious human rights abuses of regimes that stretch from Beijing to Moscow, Tehran to Riyadh and Havana to Caracas.

In the latest manifestation of the U.N.'s Israel obsession, its Human Rights Council (which is perhaps the U.N.'s most comically misnamed institution) is preparing in the coming weeks to release a "blacklist" of about 200 companies around the world that do business in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. The list is apparently designed to shame them into severing their business ties with those Israeli-run areas.

Some 130 Israeli and 60 international companies received letters recently from the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights - whom the Human Rights Council asked to create the list nearly two years ago - to inform them that they're being "blacklisted" for "acting contrary to international law and U.N. decisions." The companies reportedly include Israeli banks, supermarkets and restaurant chains as well as such U.S. companies as Caterpillar, TripAdvisor, Priceline.com, and Airbnb.

The request to create such a list not only reflects the Human Rights Council's outsized focus on the Jewish state, but also reveals the rank hypocrisy of its membership, which includes some of the world's worst human rights abusers.

The list will have no force of law, but it could still prove harmful to Israel if companies decide that doing business in those Israeli-run areas isn't worth the risk to their corporate reputations. It's another manifestation of the global campaign by public institutions and private activists to destroy Israel not by defeating it on the battlefield but by delegitimizing it in the court of public opinion. Among other things, the list would provide further fuel for the BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) movement against Israel that's popular in Europe and on U.S. college campuses.

That explains why Israel and its most important ally, the United States, are working hard to pressure the U.N. High Commissioner, Jordan's Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, not to publish the list. Though they may not ultimately succeed, they've convinced him to delay its release more than once. In the latest development, Zeid now says that the list he had promised by year's end won't be out until early next year.

That the Human Rights Council launched this effort is hardly surprising, considering its well-entrenched anti-Israel bias. It puts Israel's human rights record, and not that of any other country, on the agenda for each of its three yearly meetings. A quarter of its resolutions have focused on Israel - nearly three times as many as Syria, where Bashar Assad has slaughtered tens of thousands of his people in recent years in his desperate quest to retain power.

In a larger sense, however, one wonders whether this council should be judging any country on its human rights record. After all, its 47 members include such models of human rights virtue as China, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Burundi, the Congo, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Venezuela and Cuba - all categorized as "not free" (the lowest possible ranking) in Freedom House's 2017 "Freedom in the World" report. Israel, by the way, was categorized as "free" (the highest ranking).

To what, then, should we attribute the council's obsession with the world's lone Jewish state, which also happens to be the Middle East's lone democracy? It's hard to argue with the conclusions of senior Israeli government officials as well as leading Israel backers in the private sector.

Because, with regard to the list, "Israel, the Jewish state, alone is singled out, the intent and impact is anti-Semitic," says Anne Herzberg, a U.N. expert. The list, added Danny Danon, Israel's U.N. ambassador, is "an expression of modern anti-Semitism reminiscent of dark periods in our history."

For the 47 Human Rights Commission members who focus obsessively on the alleged sins of one nation, and especially for those members with human rights records that mock their very membership on the council, one biblical admonition seems particularly fitting: "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone."

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