



Friends of Israel Initiative meets with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres

On April 3, a Friends of Israel Initiative (FOII) delegation met with the United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, at the UN headquarters in New York. FOII's delegation was headed by José María Aznar, Lord David Trimble, Giulio Terzi, Karl Theodor zu Gutenberg, Ambassador Pierre Richard Prosper, Colonel Richard Kemp and Rafael Bardaji.

The purpose of the meeting was to present Guterres an array of recommendations to stop and prevent anti-Israel bias in several UN organizations. The delegation also offered him FOII's help to reach that goal. During the meeting, these FOII members conveyed that now is the moment to rebalance the treatment of Israel in the UN.

Among other recommendations, the FOII delegation suggested Guterres a review of the election system for the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in order to prevent human right abusers to take control of the body, or to act firmly if one member state calls for the destruction of Israel — as Iran has made in too many occasions. The FOII delegation also emphasized the depth of the problem, which affects not only Israel—the sole democracy in the Middle East—but also the entire United Nations. In this regard, the FOII recommendations delivered to Guterres highlighted that the obsession with Israel and the double standard applied is undermining the prospects for peace in the Middle East as well as the prestige and valuable resources of the UN to confront other important challenges for the organization.

Guterres thanked FOII's delegation for the offer and pointed out that he will try to curb this alarming trend as far as his jurisdiction would allow. Guterres expressed his desire to achieve fair and equal treatment for Israel in several UN bodies and to rebalance the situation; nonetheless, there are great restrictions to his power in those bodies and agencies.

Over the last years, the UN General Assembly, the UNHRC and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), among others, have certainly shown unprecedented, disproportionate, and unfair hostility towards Israel, as FOII has constantly denounced. Those organizations have intensively contributed to the international delegitimation of Israel by issuing one-sided resolutions and unjust condemnations at alarming levels. For instance, in 2016, the General Assembly issued 20 resolutions criticizing Israel and only 4 for the rest of the world combined. Since its founding in 2006, the UNHRC has issued 68 resolutions condemning Israel, out of a total of 135 approved resolutions. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been linked to terrorist groups, which call and work for the destruction of Israel, such as Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

The latest UN anti-Israel scandal has been the report by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) called Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid, which states that Israel has established an "apartheid regime." Secretary-General Guterres distanced himself from the report—it was removed from the UNESCWA website—and Rima Khalaf, then head of ESCWA and UN Undersecretary General, resigned in protest. The UNESCWA is preparing another report to assess the "cumulative cost of the occupation" supposedly analyzing slavery in the United States, or the Nazi occupation of Greece as comparative situations.

However, as the FOII delegation remarked at the meeting with Guterres, Israel is not the only victim of this unfair

treatment. The prestige of the UN and peace between Israelis and Palestinians are also important victims of this pernicious attitude. The obsessive fixation with Israel shown by several important UN organizations has damaged the respect for the institution, as it appears to have been kidnapped by non-democratic countries with certain goals. In addition, due to this situation, the UN is losing valuable resources to manage other complex situations that should be top duties. Regarding peace in the Middle East, the constant condemnation against the State of Israel in unwarranted and unreasonable terms by these UN organizations rewards the Palestinian leadership's obstructionist and intermittently violent attitude, which greatly exacerbates the formidable challenge of peacemaking in the region.

In spite of this situation, some UN member States are taking action to halt the outrageous treatment against Israel. Last month, U.S. Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, warned that the United States will abandon the UN Human Rights Council unless the organization undertakes "considerable reform" and reiterated America's strong objection to the UNHRC's biased agenda against Israel. On March 24, the United Kingdom put the UNHRC "on notice" and stated; "If things do not change, in the future we will adopt a policy of voting against all resolutions concerning Israel's conduct in the Occupied Syrian and Palestinian Territories."

It seems that tolerating anti-Israel bias in the UN is being confronted at last and FOII has played a main role in it. Indeed, FOII will strongly support the rebalancing of the treatment towards Israel in the UN envisioned by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. We will work tirelessly to achieve it.

After this meeting, FOII has shown once again its powerful and high level reach in defense of Israel's right to exist and to be treated normally by the international community.

The High Level Military Group (HLMG) Fact-Finding Mission to Study the threat by Hezbollah on the ground.



The next war between Israel and Hezbollah might be getting near. Analysts and experts have pointed it out and, in case of another outbreak of violence, the conflict would be tougher and bigger than the one in 2006 due to Hezbollah's evolution throughout the last years.

Concerned about this issue, the High Level Military Group (HLMG), a widely successful project sponsored by the Friends of Israel Initiative, has decided to study the threat by Hezbollah on the ground and how Israel is prepared to confront a new escalation of hostilities.

From March 20 to 24, the group carried out a fact-finding mission in Israel with an extraordinary level of access — as the one in 2015, when the HLMG studied Operation Protective Edge. As a result, HLMG members visited training camps of Israel's Defense Forces (IDF) for urban warfare and the Syrian and Lebanon border. They were briefed by top level officials in the IDF commands involved in the planning of an eventual engagement against Hezbollah (the Northern Command, the Air Force, the Navy, the Home Front Command, the Intelligence, and the International Law Department.) The HLMG also met with Israel's Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense in order to get firsthand information regarding the Hezbollah threat.

For this new project, the HLMG has added prestigious new members: Lord Richard Dannatt, former Chief of the General Staff of the United Kingdom, and U.S. Lieutenant General Michael Barbero, former director of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO).

In the mission, the HLMG was informed that, since the end of the 2006 Lebanon war, Hezbollah has amassed 100,000 missiles (including mid- and long-range) and has also acquired game-changing, Russian-made, Yakhont anti-ship missiles (able to attack Israeli ships,) nuclear facilities (as Hassan Nasrallah threatened last month,) and gas fields in the sea. According to intelligence sources, Hezbollah is also equipped with Iran-made Mohajer-4 drones.

In addition to its armory, Hezbollah has undergone a transformation after years fighting in the ongoing civil war in Syria under the command of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), that is deployed in Syria in order to support Bashar al-Assad's regime. According to Wall Street Journal correspondent in the Middle East, there is a clear winner in the civil war: Hezbollah.

The HLMG could clearly observe that if Hezbollah starts again a massive launching of missiles towards Israel, the IDF will face an asymmetric conflict against an enemy who fights inside urban populations and takes advantage of it. The IDF procedures and strategic planning, as observed by the HLMG, show that Israeli forces are well prepared to minimize civil casualties and to fully abide by the rules of engagement compliances established by the Laws of Armed Conflict — just as it has done in the past.

Last but not least, after the fact-finding mission, the HLMG is totally aware that Hezbollah is the main Iranian proxy in the Middle East, the “A-Team” of terrorist groups in the world, as former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage put it. Hezbollah is not an ordinary jihadist group in the Middle East, but one of Iran’s tools to expand its influence and power in the region and to serve as a forward line against the State of Israel. Nowadays, Hezbollah receives funds from Iran in an estimated amount of 100 million euros per year and it is under the command of the Quds Force, the IRGC’s foreign branch.

In coming weeks, the HLMG will release a report with its key findings and conclusions of the mission, including an in-depth analysis on Hezbollah’s strategic and military capability, its qualitative win due to involvement in the ongoing Syrian civil war, the Iranian-backed-and-led strategy to dominate the Middle East, the difficulties to defeat Hezbollah on Lebanese ground, the warfare conditions in vast urban areas where Hezbollah troops will presumably hide, the role of Lebanese forces, and the resilience of the Israeli population, among other issues.

A new Hezbollah campaign of massive rocket and missile launching against the north of Israel and the IDF response would start a hard and difficult war for Israel. It will also initiate another international attempt to delegitimize Israel’s right to self-defense. Therefore, thanks to the HLMG upcoming report, we at the Friends of Israel Initiative will be better prepared to help Israel in the international arena in case of an eventual war with Hezbollah.

FOII’S ACTIVITIES

Op-eds and Media

“**The chutzpah of Sayeeda Warsi**” Colonel Richard Kemp, The Times of Israel, April 3 ([Read](#))

“**International Community Ignoring Hezbollah threat to Israel**”, interview with Colonel Richard Kemp, Jerusalem Post, April 1 ([Read](#))

“**A Sparkling Comet at the UN**” Fiamma Nirenstein, Il Giornale, March 4 ([Read](#))

“**The Centenary of the Balfour Declaration**” Professor Andrew Roberts, Tencent Dajia, February 21 ([Read](#))

Working papers

Options for Jerusalem
Elias Cohen

The final status of Jerusalem is one of the core issues of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Throughout this working paper, Elias Cohen analyses and studies the legal and historic origins of the problem and presents all the proposals on the table seeking to reach a lasting solution for Jerusalem.

[Read the Working Paper.](#)

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"On one side, supporters of Israel feel that it is harshly judged by standards that are not applied to its enemies ... and too often this is true, particularly in some U.N. bodies."

Ban Ki-moon

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