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## Human Rights Council

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**Human rights situation in Palestine and other  
occupied Arab territories**

## **Written statement\* submitted by the Amuta for NGO Responsibility, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[10 September 2017]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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## **Submission of the Amuta for NGO Responsibility**

### **Guterres' Israel Visit – An Opportunity to Reset Relationship with the UN**

From August 27-29, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres made his first visit to Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Guterres' trip to the region was a positive initial step to improve the UN's dysfunctional relationship with Israel and establish better cooperation.

For better and for worse the UN has played a central role in Israel's history. The UN Charter, incorporating the League of Nations Mandate for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the November 29, 1947 vote endorsing the partition plan, provided legitimacy to Israel's formation as a modern nation state.

However, in addition to this founding role the UN has also played a highly destructive part in the region, often fueling the Arab-Israeli conflict and acting as a significant contributor to global antisemitism. For example, the UN has allowed the Arab League and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation to hijack the institution to promote its strategy of anti-Israel rejectionism. As a result, Israel is singled out at almost every UN body for condemnation – to the effect of more resolutions passed against the state than all other countries combined.

At the General Assembly, the body denigrated Jewish self-determination by passing the bigoted Zionism is Racism resolution in 1975, which while revoked, still has had a lasting effect. Notably, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) revived this antisemitic canard to launch BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) campaigns against Israel at the 2001 UN Durban Conference.

UN agencies have also played a disturbing and significant role in enabling Palestinian terrorism – whether through the invention and promotion of a so-called “right of resistance” or by erasing the context of Palestinian terrorist attacks in its dozens of reports on Israel (see for instance the 2009 Goldstone Report).

UNRWA – the UN agency dedicated solely to the Palestinian refugees – prolongs the conflict by fetishizing the “return” of Palestinians to cities within Israel's 1948 borders and looks the other way when its teachers post vicious antisemitic and violent content on social media.

UNIFIL – the so-called “peacekeepers” on the Lebanese border – have allowed Hezbollah to reestablish posts steps away from Israeli towns and to embed more than 100,000 missiles, aimed at Israeli civilians, in Lebanese villages.

UN officials have also allowed the PLO to damage the UN's own credibility. As laid out by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in an 2012 oped to the *New York Times*, “Palestine's admission to the United Nations would pave the way for the internationalization of the conflict as a legal matter, not only a political one. It would also pave the way for us to pursue claims against Israel at the United Nations, human rights treaty bodies and the International Court of Justice.”

And indeed, the PLO has taken advantage of its preferential and exceptional status at the UN to exploit almost every framework -- not to engage in creating a better world and advancing human rights in the Palestinian Authority, but to use these institutions as platforms for anti-Israel political warfare. As noted in the June 2017 OHCHR accountability report, although in 2014 the State of Palestine purported to join seven core human rights treaties, they are overdue on seven of their required reports. The PLO has a cadre of lawyers (many of whom were former UN officials) at its disposal and admits its membership at the UN is to use the human rights treaty bodies to pursue legal warfare against Israel. Yet the Palestinian leadership now suddenly claims they are unable to draft and submit their own reports under these mechanisms?

Notably, since taking office in October 2016, Secretary General Guterres has taken important steps to reset Israel's relationship with the UN, speaking out strongly against the institution's antisemitism and seeking to implement much needed and long-overdue reforms. For instance, Guterres has emphasized that the denial of Israel's right to exist is a form of antisemitism and has denounced the recent resolutions passed by UNESCO for denying the Jewish historical connection to the region. In March 2017, he ordered the removal of a report issued by a UN agency known as "ESCWA" that employed the apartheid slur and promoted BDS campaigns. After a Palestinian NGO participated in the inauguration of women's center named after a terrorist who slaughtered 38 Israelis including 13 children, he prompted UN Women to retract its funding.

Importantly, during his visit, Guterres stressed that calling for Israel's destruction is a "form of modern anti-Semitism" and that "he would treat Israel with 'impartiality' amid vocal complaints by Israeli officials that the world body is biased against the Jewish state." In addition, he reiterated "very strongly the total commitment of the United Nations [and] my personal total commitment to do everything for a two-state solution to materialize . . . there is no Plan B to a two-state solution".

Yet, the UN continues to promote, fund, and recycle the claims of organizations that seek Israel's destruction, that entrench UN bias, and that vehemently oppose the two-state solution.

UN agencies such as the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) are explicitly engaged in the promotion of anti-Israel demonization. These agencies partner with and routinely rely on a small group of NGOs with alleged affiliations to terrorist groups, leaders of BDS campaigns, groups that espouse antisemitic views—almost all explicitly reject two states for two peoples -- to produce reports aimed at continuing the UN's trend of anti-Israel political warfare. For instance, OHCHR is currently preparing in conjunction with BDS activists a discriminatory blacklist targeting companies that do business with Israel.

The UN special rapporteur to the region was appointed specifically because he has a history of extreme anti-Israel activism and in his position has promoted as human rights defenders (in violation of UN standards) individuals linked to terror groups, BDS, and those expressing vile antisemitism and violent incitement. And CERIPP regularly promotes the activities and events of many NGOs that not only reject a two-state solution, but actively work against it.

To right these many wrongs, Secretary General Guterres should reform the UN reporting process and insist that UN agencies consult a wide variety of actors, rather than the current uncritical reliance on political partisans and select NGOs. He should demand that OHCHR immediately cancel the discriminatory blacklist and insist that future endeavours relating to corporate activities must include all countries. Guterres should further demand that UNHRC end its practice of appointing anti-Israel demagogues as Rapporteurs and disqualify any candidates that fit this profile. Finally, he must end UN funding and cooperation to NGOs that are affiliated with terrorist groups, promote BDS, deny Israel's right to exist, and/or express antisemitic views.

Carrying out these much needed reforms will send a clear message that the "anti-Israel business as usual" at the UN is a thing of the past. By taking these steps, the UN and Israel can restore their relationship and embark on a new era of positive and constructive engagement and cooperation.