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Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

Written statement* submitted by United Nations Watch, 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.

[18 August 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Breach of United Nations Rules by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967

United Nations Watch is concerned by statements that incite violence and terrorism made by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories. This is contrary to the spirit of her duties as a UN human rights expert to uphold the core UN values of universality and impartiality,¹ and violates the Charter of the United Nations and other UN Rules requiring staff to uphold the highest standards of competence and integrity.

Article 101 of the UN Charter requires “the paramount consideration in the employment of staff” to be “securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity.” The Code of Conduct for Special Procedures in Article 3 likewise requires special procedures to “uphold the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, meaning, in particular, though not exclusively, probity, impartiality, equity, honesty and good faith.”²

The Code of Conduct further emphasizes the need for mandate-holders to act independently and impartially (Article 3); and admonishes mandate-holders to “bear in mind the need to ensure that their personal political opinions are without prejudice to the execution of their mission,” and thus to “show restraint, moderation and discretion so as not to undermine the recognition of the independent nature of their mandate” (Article 12).

Similarly, the UNHRC’s Manual for Special Procedures states in para. 11 that mandate-holders must be independent and impartial.³ In discussing the importance of “independence,” the Manual quotes the Secretary-General who expressed concern that “in the absence of complete independence, human rights mandate-holders and special rapporteurs would hesitate to speak out against and report violations of international human rights standards.” This is reinforced in para. 82, which makes clear that in situations where a peace process is under way, the mandate-holder should not be seen to be taking sides with one party to the conflict.

The clear expectation is that the UN expert will address violations by all relevant actors. For example, para. 5 of the Manual sets out the principal functions of Special Procedures, which include to advise on measures taken by the Government concerned “and other relevant actors.” Moreover, the Manual devotes an entire section to “Non-State Actors,” in which it states that “non-State actors can also be held accountable for human rights violations and may be relevant interlocutors in the quest to restore respect for human rights and to establish accountability for violations.”

Yet, despite these directives, the current Special Rapporteur’s statements indicate a complete lack of independence and impartiality, failing to speak out for Israeli victims and granting impunity to Palestinian violators. As shown below, her statements incite Palestinian violence against Israelis, defend terrorists, deny Israel’s right to exist, and dismiss antisemitism.

Below are some examples of statements by the Special Rapporteur that violate core UN values and rules:

A. Justifying and Inciting Violence

- “Palestinian violence is inevitable because the right to exist of the Palestinian people has been denied for 55 years.” (May 17, 2022, RAI News Interview).⁴
- “Israel says ‘resistance equals terrorism’ but an occupation requires violence and generates violence. The Palestinians have no other room for dissent than violence.” (June 9, 2022, Atreconomia).⁵
- Replying to @herzallah_moath who says international law clearly supports “occupied people’s right to armed resistance,” The SR concurs: “That is a necessary conversation to have.” (August 8, 2022, Twitter).⁶

- “Palestinians’ right to resist is inherent to their right as a people.” (August 8, 2022, Twitter).⁷ In light of her prior tweets, “right to resist” clearly means “armed resistance.”

B. Endorsing and Defending Terrorists

- A.M., convicted Palestinian terrorist who, together with his 15-year-old cousin, stabbed two Israelis in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Pisgat Zeev, including a 13-year-old Israeli boy who was critically injured.
- Shares petition to United States of America Congress to free A.M., with expression of solidarity: “Ahmad: you are not alone.” (May 19, 2022, Twitter).⁸
- Condemns “inhumanity” of Israel’s “brutal arrest and interrogation” of A.M., in jail “since he was 13”; calls for his release. (July 31, 2022, Twitter).⁹
- A.A.F., 17-year-old member of Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror group killed in clash between armed Palestinians and the IDF, after armed Palestinians shot and threw fire-bombs at Israeli soldiers.
- Shares photo of innocent-looking Palestinian teen A.F. without mentioning his terrorist affiliation or activities, implies Israeli security operations against terrorists in Jenin are not justified. (May 23, 2022, Twitter).¹⁰ Between March and May 2022, 11 Israelis were killed in three terror attacks carried out by Palestinians from the Jenin area.
- Ghassan Kanafani, one of the leaders of the PFLP terrorist group, known for its airplane hijackings in the 1970s and other terrorist attacks, including the Lod airport massacre.
- Likes a tweet commemorating Ghassan Kanafani on the 50th anniversary of his assassination. (July 9, 2022, Twitter).¹¹
- Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Iranian-sponsored terrorist group.
- Tweets that Israeli strikes against Palestinian Islamic Jihad targets in Gaza are not self-defense, are “flagrant act of aggression” that violates international law, and are “Illegal. Immoral. Irresponsible.” (August 6, 2022, Twitter).¹²
- Suggests that Palestinian Islamic Jihad is entitled to protect itself by launching indiscriminate rockets at Israel, responding to tweet by the United States of America Ambassador Tom Nides affirming Israel’s right to self-defense by stating that “calm will follow suit” when the international community recognizes “the right of all concerned to protect themselves.” (August 7, 2022, Twitter).¹³
- Likes tweets suggesting that indiscriminate PIJ rocket attacks on Israel are justified because “they don’t have precision missiles” and these are “the only weapons they have.” (August 7, 2022, Twitter).¹⁴

C. Denying Israel’s right to exist

- Tweets about Israel’s “violent 55 year-old occupation,” and then endorses her follower’s correction that it is “74 years, not 55.”¹⁵ The SR responds to the correction, tweeting “that is another story. Even more painful. Still longing for justice,”¹⁶ meaning longing for justice regarding the very creation of Israel in 1948. Then she likes a reply claiming that Israel’s occupation goes back more than 100 years to the Balfour Declaration in 1917.¹⁷
- Likes a tweet of a photo of President Joe Biden speaking at Israel’s Ben Gurion airport with the caption “Joe Biden, Speaking to Israeli Officials Upon Landing in Occupied Palestine,” even though this was not in the West Bank.¹⁸ The tweet also claims “Zionism is a racist, supremacist, colonialist and pro-Nazi movement.”

D. Minimizes Antisemitism

- Defends and expresses solidarity with Israel COI member Miloon Kothari against accusations of antisemitism after his “Jewish lobby” remarks, suggesting these were “possibly poorly chosen words” that were “disingenuously mischaracterized” and proclaiming allegations of antisemitism are “preposterous.”²⁰ Notably, Kothari’s remarks were condemned by four UN officials—including Secretary-General Guterres and UNHRC President Federico Villegas—and at least 17 governments.
- Likes a tweet objecting to the IHRA definition of antisemitism on the basis that it “restrict[s] free speech on Israel and Palestinian rights.”²¹
- Likes a tweet equating Jews with Israelis, asking “where are the masses of moderate Jews to condemn this abominable ‘state,’” referring to recent incident where Palestinian workers were ordered off an Israeli bus to make room for Jewish passengers.²² The bus company later apologized.

United Nations Watch urges relevant United Nations officials, including the Secretary-General, High Commissioner for Human Rights, and President of the Human Rights Council, as well as UN Member States to condemn this blatantly partisan advocacy, inflammatory conduct, and dangerous incitement by a UN official, and to take action to ensure that all UN officials—including those dealing the Arab-Israel conflict—adhere to core UN values and rules.

1 See Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council, UN Doc. HRC/RES/5/2 (June 18, 2007),

https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/5/2.

2 Id.

3 Manual of Operations of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council (August 2008), https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/SP/Manual_Operations2008.pdf.

4 @Hillelneuer, Twitter (May 17, 2022, 3:40 PM),

<https://twitter.com/HillelNeuer/status/1526543254363291649>.

5 @UNWatch, Twitter (June 20, 2022, 1:24 PM),

<https://twitter.com/UNWatch/status/1538830194332639232>.

6 @FranceskAlbs, Twitter (August 8, 2022, 9:56 AM),

<https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1556534732715876353>.

7 @FranceskAlbs, Twitter (August 8, 2022, 2:47 PM),

<https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1556608057450369025>.

8 @FranceskAlbs, Twitter (May 19, 2022, 7:42 AM),

https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1527147602139037702?s=20&t=wWZdWKS_iIm8qn0eKKy2KQ.

9 @FranceskAlbs, Twitter (July 31, 2022, 8:16 PM),

<https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1553791703957622785>.

10 @FranceskAlbs, Twitter (May 23, 2022, 12:46 AM),

<https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1528492532522418177?s=20&t=KajtSohUVfHMMon3FGFxnw>.

11 Screenshot of Francesca Albanese liking tweet by @alfalastenyeh (July 9, 2022),

<https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/from-the-river-to-the-sea...-Ghassan-Kanafani.png>.

12 @FranceskAlbs, Twitter (August 6, 2022, 11:42 AM),

<https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1555836586985676800>.

13 @FranceskAlbs, Twitter (August 7, 2022, 1:17 AM),

<https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1556041782877716482>.

14 Screenshot of Francesca Albanese liking tweets by @G70Malone and @TameeOliveFern (August 7, 2022), <https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Jusifying-PIJ-rocket-attacks-as-resistance-acts-and-saying-they-target-military-objectives.png>.

15 FranceskAlbs, Twitter (August 8, 2022, 12:02 AM),

<https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1556385406358372353>.

- 16 FranceskAlbs, Twitter (August 8, 2022, 12:02 AM),
<https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1556385406358372353>.
- 17 Screenshot of Francesca Albanese liking tweet by @rubio_chef (June 10, 2022),
<https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/100-years-of-illegal-occupation-tweet.png>.
- 18 Screenshot of Francesca Albanese liking tweet by @rubio_chef (July 14, 2022),
<https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Ben-Gurion-Airport-is-occupied-original-version.png>.
- 19 @FranceskAlbs, Twitter (July 29, 2022, 5:29 PM),
<https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1553024893037453312>.
- 20 @FranceskAlbs, Twitter (July 29, 2022, 6:05 PM),
<https://twitter.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1553034094296109056>.
- 21 Screenshot of Francesca Albanese liking tweet by @PDeepdive (July 17, 2022),
<https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/criticizing-IHRA-antisemitism-definition.png>.
- 22 Screenshot of Francesca Albanese liking tweet by @sjabulhawa (August 12, 2022),
<https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Liking-a-tweet-blaming-Jews-instead-of-Israelis.png>.