

The Executive Memorandum

The Heritage Foundation

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WHAT DOES THE U.N. HAVE AGAINST ISRAEL?

The United Nations is waging a war against Israel and has been doing so for years. The recent anti-Israeli moves at the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Telecommunications Union, and even the General Assembly, are only the latest instances of this. It is not necessary to condone all the policy decisions of the Israeli move into Lebanon to recognize that the U.N.'s treatment of the Jewish state in recent years amounts to sheer harassment. Secretary of State George Shultz's determination to leave any U.N. body that expels Israel, echoing the near-unanimous decision of Congress to that effect on May 13, 1982, amounts to a refusal to go along with the U.N.'s double standard.

Although the U.N. maintains an eerie silence about such blatant human rights violators as the Soviet Union, Cuba, Pol Pot's Kampuchea, and Idi Amin's Uganda, Israel was condemned in 1982 as a "non-peace-loving state"--the only U.N. member so named. Since the Charter restricts U.N. membership to "peace-loving" states, this language opens the door to Israel's expulsion from the U.N.

The U.N.'s campaign against Israel can be traced back at least to 1967, following the Six-Day War. Since then, nearly two hundred resolutions hostile to Israel have been adopted in the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights. In recent years half the time of the Security Council and half the total of its resolutions have condemned the Jewish state, with practically no mention of PLO and other Arab contributions to Middle East tensions and violence. The double standard is glaring. A proposed Security Council resolution in 1975 to condemn Israeli raids on Palestinian targets in Lebanon failed to mention Arab violence against Israel.

The anti-Israel campaign pervades the entire U.N. system. In the last decade Israeli participation has been attacked in virtually every Agency of the U.N. system except the General Assembly. Israel, for example, is no longer a member of the Commission on Human Rights though most of the Commission's members have far worse human rights records than Israel. Israel is also the only country in the world subject to special sanctions by the U.N. Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Though Israel and South Africa were condemned as "an unholy alliance" by the General Assembly in Resolution 3151 G(XXVII) of December 14, 1973, not even South Africa is subjected to such sanctions.

The watershed year at the U.N. was 1974: on November 13, the General Assembly session was addressed by PLO chief Yassir Arafat. For

the first time in its history, the U.N. extended observer status to a non-nation. In November and December of that year, UNESCO's general conference approved a series of resolutions condemning Israel on various grounds and blocking its requested membership in the organization's European regional grouping. UNESCO specifically condemned Israel for allegedly endangering Moslem monuments in Jerusalem--a charge later shown to be unfounded. The organization then cut off all funds for Israeli projects.

A year later, UNESCO inserted into an official document a reference to the infamous "Zionism is racism" General Assembly resolution 3379 (XXX), a document that infuriated even long-time supporters of the U.N.

On May 17, 1976, the World Health Organization refused to consider an expert committee's report that health services in Israeli-occupied Arab territories, far from having deteriorated, had seen a "slow but steady" improvement since 1967. This conclusion was not what the Third World majority at WHO was looking for. It was therefore rejected despite the fact that two of the three experts on the committee were from countries having no diplomatic relations with Israel.

Since 1975, the U.N. majority has escalated its attacks on Israel. About 40 resolutions passed by the 36th General Assembly in 1981 dealt with the Middle East, invariably chastising Israel while not mentioning PLO attacks on Israeli civilians, including women and children.

For at least a decade and a half, Israel has been badgered by the U.N.'s new majority. Ignoring, at times, both facts and legal provisions, this majority has chosen to chastise Israel while worse human rights offenders go completely without reproof and Arab hostilities and terrorist acts go unmentioned.

Whatever its transgressions--and surely no state is devoid of sins--Israel does not deserve to be denied participation in the General Assembly and membership in the U.N. agencies. If it does, so do the great majority of U.N. members. What does the U.N. have against Israel? It is a puzzle--despite the thousands of hours of rhetoric devoted to the issue. Indeed, it seems that the U.N. can make no solid, juridical or moral case against Israel. As such, the U.N. majority--cowed by the Soviet Bloc and radical Arab states--resorts to a sordid double standard. Israel deserves better. So does the U.N.

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This report is based on an internal Heritage Foundation study, part of which is to be published shortly.

For further reading see:

Marjorie Ann Browne, "Credentials in the United Nations General Assembly: Selected Precedents," Congressional Research Service, September 30, 1980.

Daniel G. Partan, Documentary Study of the Politicization of UNESCO, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, November 1975.

Juliana Geran Pilon, "Through the Looking Glass: The Political Culture of the U.N.," Heritage Backgrounder #206, August 30, 1982.