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Contact: Dina Siegel Vann: 011 27 82 858-1131

Jewish Caucus Withdraws from UN Conference Against Racism

(Official Statement from the Jewish Caucus' September 4, 2001 Press Conference)

B'nai B'rith International President Richard D. Heideman, the highest-ranking Jewish organizational leader attending the conference, made the following statement on behalf of the Jewish organizational caucus in Durban, South Africa:

“Today, Jewish organizations convened in Durban as the Jewish Caucus, and representing international, national, regional and Jewish humanitarian and human rights organizations, walked out of the World Conference Against Racism to protest the singling out of Israel and the use of antisemitism as a political device.

“During this conference, Israel has been the target of spurious allegations of genocide, ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity. It is the only nation on earth singled out for criticism in the World Conference's governmental draft documents.

“We appreciate the efforts by well-meaning nations to correct these wrongs. Nevertheless, at the NGO [non-governmental organizations] Forum, antisemitic caricatures of the Jew as the personification of evil – reminiscent of Nazi propaganda – were distributed freely to thousands of delegates. Jewish student groups experienced antisemitic and violent incidents during its Youth Summit. There were many other acts of hostility toward Jewish participants, as well.

“The United Nations was founded to promote human rights and international security. This conference, though, has undermined these principles. We now call upon the United Nations to abide by its own mission. Failure to do so compromises the very essence of the United Nations.

“We condemn this conference, but we are not abandoning its goals. As Jewish organizations dedicated to the promotion of human rights worldwide, we are determined to continue to strive toward the eradication of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance as it affects all people.”

This statement was issued: B'nai B'rith International, British Board of Jewish Deputies, South African Board of Jewish Deputies, Hadassah, International Council of Jewish Women, WIZO, World Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, B'nai B'rith Europe, World Union of Jewish Students, Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Consultative Council of Jewish Organizations, Centre European Juif d'information, Cape Town Holocaust Centre, National Council of Jewish Women of Australia, Simon Wiesenthal Center.