

July 21, 2014

H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General
United Nations
New York

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

We write with dismay over your having chosen to describe an Israeli defensive operation – upon arriving in the Middle East in order to pursue a Palestinian-Israeli ceasefire – as “atrocious.” We submit that this characterization is disconnected from the complex reality of facts on the ground – and that the repeated subjection of Israel to a double standard in freedom to protect its citizens, and the singling out of Israel for unjust condemnation, does not help, but rather hinders, the goal of preventing new bloodshed.

You said in Qatar that “[g]oing back to the status quo ante in Gaza and the continuing siege of Gaza is not sustainable. There is only one way to avoid the cycle of war and perpetual insecurity for all – and that is by addressing the root causes of the conflict. That means a return to the negotiating table and talks for a two-state solution.”

The status quo ante, Mr. Secretary-General, is indeed both unsustainable and intolerable. As you surely know, though, the ultimate “root cause” of Arab-Israeli conflict is not Israel, which accepts in word and deed the rights of its neighbors, but increasingly lethal terrorist groups like Hamas, which openly, violently and doctrinally reject a two-state solution and Israel’s right to exist at all. Moreover, it is not Israel, which mourns and seeks to avoid Israeli and Palestinian civilian casualties, but groups like Hamas – which intentionally and indiscriminately target Israeli civilians from among Palestinian civilians – whose actions should be condemned as atrocious. Indeed, these actions should have been condemned as atrocious for many years – and when Hamas was brought into an unacceptable political partnership with Fatah – and not merely once Israel has finally been forced to assertively combat the threats and attacks facing its citizens.

Mr. Secretary-General, some twenty rockets were discovered last week to have been stored by Palestinian terrorists in an UNWRA school in the Gaza Strip. When will this be personally and publicly condemned by you as atrocious? Most shocking, there has been no indication that the rockets were not again made accessible to terrorist elements in Gaza by UNRWA. This scandalous development demands your personal attention and accounting, as it is unimaginable that a United Nations agency might be complicit in directly, as a result of its recklessness, threatening the lives of Israeli and Palestinian children alike. In the immediate term, the transfer of deadly weaponry to terrorists must

be prevented from occurring in the future, and photographic evidence of the exposed weapons cache must be made available to the international community.

Mr. Secretary-General, as you have begun your peace mission in the Middle East at a particularly tense time, you have seen fit to further exacerbate tensions and risk emboldening Palestinian fanatics by speaking only of the “siege” of Gaza and the need to end it. Should not the condition to which Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad and their Iranian state patron have long subjected millions of Israeli citizens, of all backgrounds, not be deplored as a “siege,” one that is unsustainable and that needs to end immediately? Is the way to prevent further regional violence to afford further unfettered armament and operational freedom, as well as political concessions and legitimacy, to groups like Hamas – for example, to allow the uncontrolled import into Gaza of cement that can be used not to improve the lives of Palestinian constituents but to build advanced, cross-border tunnels enabling the hostage-taking and murder of Israelis?

B’nai B’rith International joins you in distress over tragic, recurring hostilities in the Middle East, and in desire for coexistence and peace there. As long as Israel’s “right to defend itself,” however, is never upheld in practice – and the foremost, obvious impediments to a two-state solution are ignored – no peace missions and no rhetorical appeals for peace will be successful. At the same time, any serious role for the UN in promoting progress in the region will continue to be eroded, while ordinary Israelis and Palestinians suffer the consequences.

Sincerely,

Allan J. Jacobs
President

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Director of UN and Intercommunal Affairs