

22nd SESSION - Item 7

Statement read on behalf of B'nai B'rith International
and the Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations on 18 March
2013 by K. Netter

Madame/Mr President:

One year ago this Council voted to establish an "independent international fact finding Mission (FFM) ... to investigate the implications of Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, with a mandate ending on submission of a report to the Council..." After a full day devoted exclusively to a tirade of anti-Israel condemnations at each and every Council session under item 7 as well as an untold number of resolutions and special sessions singling out Israel for a variety of alleged human rights violations, the FFM resolution constituted the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back and led Israel to suspend all contact with the Human Rights Council. Israel had real reason to fear that the establishment of yet another fact-finding mission would open the way for a long series of attacks and resolutions along the lines of the follow-up to the Goldstone report meanwhile disavowed by the chairman of that Mission.

Israel did not require much prescience to divine the gist of the Mission's report and recommendations. The authors knew what was expected of them and they acted accordingly. Curiously, the detailed chronology of events since 1948 annexed to the report does not mention the armistice agreements of 1949. The one with Jordan converted the cease-fire lines into armistice lines and explicitly denied them any political significance. Yet these very armistice lines now usually referred to as the "pre-1967 borders" are the ones behind which the FFM report calls on Israel to withdraw all its settlements. But settlements are closely linked to the ultimate borders that Israel and the Palestinian Authority will have to agree on as one of the main final agreement issues agreed upon by the so-called Quartet of which the UN is a member.

Far from advancing the peace process between the two main parties, the FFM report has only reinforced Israel's doubts about returning to active participation in this Council and produced yet another source of conflict that may occupy this Council's attention for months or years to come.

Thank you Mr/Madam