

October 11, 2016

H.H. Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein
High Commissioner for Human Rights
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Dear High Commissioner Zeid:

We write to express our alarm over a report of what is described as your involvement in preparing a "blacklist" of wide-ranging Israeli and other companies deemed tied, even tangentially, to Israel's presence or actions in Palestinian-disputed territory, and specifically those to which arms of the United Nations might somehow be linked.

We appeal to you to oppose, not facilitate, partisan efforts to single out Jewish Israelis or those doing business with them for economic warfare tactics such as boycotts or divestment campaigns. These types of discriminatory and hostile maneuvers, not least when applied to only one side of only one territorial dispute, deepen and export conflict and hardship rather than promote prosperity and reconciliation.

The Middle East -- too long home to a destructive and unjust Arab boycott of Israel -- requires *more* commerce and cooperation, not further divisiveness and impediments to coexistence. Adding to Israelis' sense of isolation and the patent politicization even of global human rights mechanisms will not serve the aspirations of Palestinians, thousands upon thousands of whom earn a livelihood working in and trading with precisely those Jewish communities targeted for punitive sanctions by anti-Israel activists.

This is particularly so considering the unrelenting rejectionist extremism, resulting in repeated wars and, still, near-daily Palestinian terrorism, to which the citizens of Israel of all backgrounds have been subjected -- with nearly no comparable attention, let alone concrete response, from organs of the UN. Needless to say, Jews also remember all too well a searing history of economic discrimination, justified on varied ethically bereft pretexts in the context of wider programs of persecution.

Differences can reasonably be had over the particular policies of any government without resorting to vilification of an entire category of people or communities, oversimplification of genuinely complex questions or singling out for harm the civilians who comprise or are served by legitimate, often entirely apolitical businesses. Investing in the employment of Palestinians also makes more sense than utterly counterproductive attempts to hurt Israelis and those engaged with them.

The international Quartet on Middle East peace, of which the UN is a member, long ago affirmed that the resolution of Palestinian-Israeli disputes can only take place through meaningful, comprehensive and direct bilateral negotiations. We urge your Office to insist that issues such as those related to settlements be addressed accordingly, and not through one-sided pressure campaigns that help make peace even more elusive.

Sincerely,

Gary P. Saltzman
President

Daniel S. Mariaschin
Executive Vice President

cc: David J. Michaels, Director of UN and Intercommunal Affairs, B'nai B'rith
Klaus Netter, Main B'nai B'rith Representative, UNOG