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From: CSW Europe

To: 'CSW Europe'

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Subject: Wiesenthal Centre to UN Human Rights High Commissioner:
"Deny UN facilities to Durban Repeat Agitation"

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wiesenthal Centre to UN Human Rights High Commissioner: "Deny UN
Facilities to Durban Repeat Agitation"

Geneva, 17 October 2008

In a letter to United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Madam Navanethem Pillay, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre's Director for International Relations and Chief United Nations Delegate to the Human Rights Council, Dr. Shimon Samuels, stated that: "Our Centre was present at the WCAR in Durban 2001, where I was the only Jewish NGO representative elected to the NGO Forum International Steering Committee - there I was prevented from speaking, abusively called "the World Jew", and was unceremoniously expelled. Indeed, such expressions of antisemitic violence remain as scars on the psyche of participant Jewish NGOs."

The letter continued: "currently attending the Human Rights Council Preparatory Commission for the Durban Review Conference (DRC), I was present yesterday and today at a caucus meeting to establish an NGO Forum Committee for the DRC."

Samuels noted that: "The Chairman proposed a Committee composed of two NGOs from each region, their acceptance conditional upon their support for the Durban Programme and Plan of Action in its entirety."

Priority would be given to NGOs that were active in Durban and involved in its follow-up."

He asked for clarification as to "whether this meant support for the intergovernmental document or that of the NGO Forum (which was rejected by your predecessor, Mary Robinson, due to its hatemongering)."

The Chair blithely responded to Samuels: "The NGO Forum was a turningpoint in the history of the world. there was nothing in the NGO Forum Declaration that was antisemitic or anti-Israel. There is no guarantee that the new NGO Forum will be Semitic or antisemitic. Whatever it is will have to be accepted. the Simon Wiesenthal Centre is trying to get me to say there will be no repeat of what happened in Durban. I cannot guarantee that!"

Samuels pointed to the amazement of several NGOs present (see www.icare.to/livereport and scroll down to "editorial October 16"), when the Chair was followed by a pro-Durban activist who stated: "we will not condemn civil society. We have problems with pro-Israelis. We will condemn the occupation of Palestine. We know who you are and where to find you. we watch you in Paris and know everything about you."

The Centre stated: "Madam High Commissioner, the threatening tone, redolent of Durban, cannot be repeated in Geneva."

The letter reported that: "at today's meeting, a list of regional NGOs was announced as members of the Coordination Committee. Speakers then demanded:

- Representation from the Middle East region's Arab NGOs;
- That the European region be asked to address "Islamophobia";
- That an NGO Caucus be created to produce a hard-language Final Declaration to impact upon the Governmental document;

- To hold the NGO Forum just before the DRC in order to fully participate in influencing Governments.

Each of these positions resonates as "Durban 2001", now to be transposed to this erstwhile capital of diplomacy."

"The Coordinating Committee organizers announced that you have agreed to grant halls for an NGO Forum during the April 2009 DRC". continuing, "such meetings on UN premises will confer them legitimacy and undermine the good name of your Office. We urge you to deny facilities at the United Nations to potentially dangerous gatherings. Leave agitation to the streets of Geneva as the responsibility of the Swiss authorities," concluded Samuels.

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