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**Follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration
and Programme of Action**

Written statement* submitted by Institute for NGO Research, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[12 August 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Need to Address Antisemitism in the Aftermath of October 7

For 20 years, NGO Monitor (a project of the Institute for NGO Research) has studied and analyzed the presence of antisemitism within the human rights and humanitarian community. Antisemitism from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has become an enduring feature of political discourse about Israel and Zionism – paralleling a resurgence of physical violence against Jews over the past decade. Many institutions and individuals who claim to represent human rights and humanitarian values instead promulgate antisemitic rhetoric and tropes and condone antisemitism from executives and staff, with little to no repercussions. These organizations also consistently dismiss considerations of antisemitism as a human rights issue.

This dynamic is prevalent, characterizing the most powerful global organizations and numerous NGOs active that receive EU- and European-government funding and that are active within the UN system. At the same time, antisemitic incidents continue to be met with apathy and the absence of accountability and public debate, in particular from the institutions and governments that fund these NGOs and from their supporters.

NGO antisemitism reached new levels with the October 7 massacre perpetrated by Hamas and other Gaza-based terror groups – the most brutal attack against Jews since the Holocaust and the worst single-day atrocity since 9/11. One might have expected that, in reaction to the horrific murder, rape, torture, dismembering, and kidnapping, the human rights community would unite in condemnation of Hamas, alongside support for Israelis. Instead, NGOs that claim to promote universal human rights denied or justified the massacre, vilified Israel, and expressed antipathy for Jews. The structural antisemitism that has infected global human rights institutions was sharply manifested in the surreal denials regarding testimonies of sexual violence and other evidence of unspeakable, inhumane brutality.

Many of these NGOs are supported by governments and the UN through official development and humanitarian programs. European governments in particular have enabled NGO antisemitism and demonization by turning a blind eye to the impacts of their funding. However, after October 7, there have been signs of increased accountability: the European Union, Switzerland, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, and Austria suspended some or all of their funding to Palestinians pending investigations.

In addition, it is clear that years of NGO antisemitic activities have greatly contributed to the overall process of steadfast radicalization of the Palestinian society, dehumanization of Jews, and a complete inability to even condemn the massacre of October 7.

Atrocity Inversion

On October 7, Hamas and other Gaza-based terror groups perpetrated the world’s deadliest one-day massacre in more than 20 years. The horrific murder, torture, rape, desecration of bodies, and kidnapping of civilians posed a challenge for the network of ideologically anti-Israel NGOs, as well as many funded by European governments and the UN, that paint Israel as the worst violator of human rights in the world. In the aftermath of the brutal pogrom, how could Israel continue to be portrayed as worse than Hamas?

This strategy reflects the commitment of many NGO leaders to the ideology of post-colonialism, which automatically assigns victimhood status to Palestinians and categorizes Israel automatically as an aggressor. In this ideology, which is amplified by antisemitism, Palestinians cannot be accused of war crimes, and Israelis are not considered to be victims.

This atrocity inversion – whereby the real crimes of Hamas, including attempted genocide and ethnic cleansing, are projected onto Israel – is antisemitic, simultaneously denying the unimaginable experiences of Jewish victims and constituting a blood libel against Israel.

As documented in detail by NGO Monitor, many European-funded NGOs leveled false accusations of “genocide” against Israel. None was more prevalent than when South Africa instituted proceedings against Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), alleging that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

In its 85-page submission and during public hearings on 11-12 January, South Africa relied on a number of highly biased NGOs with links to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terror group.

South Africa's allegations follow intensive, highly politicized NGO campaigns to attach the "genocide" label to Israel. Similarly, the framing in the submission – that "Israel's acts of genocide" must be placed in the "broader context of Israel's conduct towards Palestinians during its 75-year-long apartheid..." – echoes NGO rhetoric.

NGOs also exploited the massacre and war to amplify their ongoing campaign to attach the "apartheid" label to Israel. In some instances, the "apartheid" claims were explicitly used to justify the October 7 attack.

Campus Antisemitism

Colleges and universities have become dangerous places for Jewish students – as extensively documented by organizations with expertise on campus antisemitism. Activists at anti-Israel rallies have continued to justify and celebrate the atrocities. According to Hillel International, as of July 31, there have been 1,851 total reported antisemitic incidents on college campuses since October 7, "a 700% increase compared to last year."

Pro-Palestinian protests have gone beyond legitimate criticism of Israel, and have turned towards targeting Jews. In October, Jewish students were locked in the library at Cooper Union while pro-Palestinian demonstrators pounded on the doors chanting "Free Palestine." A pro-Palestinian rally in Washington Square Park, near NYU's campus, featured a demonstrator with an antisemitic sign reading, "Please keep the world clean," and a figure placing a Star of David in a trashcan. Video from the event showed dozens of demonstrators chanting "globalize the intifada." In response to a question during Congressional hearing with the heads of Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and the University of Pennsylvania, asking if calling for the genocide of the Jews is against the schools' codes of conduct, all three answered that it depends on the "context."

In the aftermath of October 7, university leaders should have acted swiftly to stop any threats to the safety and wellbeing of Jewish students. Discrimination of any kind should not be tolerated and calls for the genocide of Jews should be condoned. Universities must do more to foster a safe place for every single student, Jews included.

Conclusion

Antisemitism is an ongoing and pervasive problem, and combating it must be considered a human rights issue alongside all other forms of discrimination. Not only does failure to tackle antisemitism harm the integrity and credibility of the UN system and its reporting, the institution should be a leader in the fight against antisemitism - not a place where Jews routinely feel marginalized and unsafe.

The genocidal antisemitism of the October 7 massacre triggered a frightening increase in attacks targeting Jews around the world. The international human rights community is complicit in both participating in blatant antisemitism and engendering an environment where it can flourish. The funders of human rights and humanitarian NGOs, as well as contributors to UN agencies – especially government sponsors – must ensure that their support does not facilitate antisemitism.