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## Goldstone reconsidered

Thursday, 28 April 2011

As CJN readers know, I've been a consistent and substantive (as distinct from personal) critic of the Goldstone report from the beginning.



Gerald Steinberg

This travesty was the predictable result of the unholy alliance between the worst human rights violators – the regimes controlling Libya, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, etc. – and powerful officials of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who exploit the façade of moral language for immoral goals. The leaders of this alliance abused the tragedy of the Gaza war (December 2008/January 2009) and Judge Richard Goldstone's reputation in order to promote a lethal political assault against Israel.

It took Goldstone a long time, but he has now taken a major step toward restoring his moral standing. Goldstone's recent article in the Washington Post belatedly acknowledges that there was no basis for the libel accusing Israeli soldiers of deliberately killing civilians in Gaza and that his report put far too little emphasis on the thousands of Palestinian missile and terror attacks against Israelis – each of which constitutes a real war crime.

Understandably, the victims of Palestinian attacks in Sderot and southern Israel whose tragedies were ignored in this report will not be quick to forgive Goldstone. And the same is true in the case of Israeli soldier Gilad Schalit, whose kidnapping was erased. Similarly, the damage caused by falsely labelling Israeli soldiers "war criminals" and accusing them of "violations of international law" won't disappear quickly. Goldstone must make his peace with them before he can be forgiven.

At the same time, many others responsible for this immoral farce have attacked Goldstone for admitting any mistakes, while they continue to promote lies about Israeli policy. This group of hard-core propagandists initially embraced the Jewish judge from South Africa who attacked Israel, but have now dismissed Goldstone's words because he no longer supports their party line. Instead of crediting him with the wisdom to see the evidence and admit mistakes, they invoke racist stereotypes of a nefarious Jewish/Zionist lobby that forced him to make statements he knew to be untrue.

For anyone who has known and listened to Goldstone, this accusation is particularly galling and unjustified, just as the personal attacks from critics of his role as the leader of the UN-NGO assault on Israel were wrong. In reality, a careful reading of Goldstone's statements over the past six months shows a gradual but growing recognition of the truth.

He admitted that the mandate provided by the UN Human Rights Council was entirely biased and that the evidence copied by the "fact-finding" commission staff from their ideological NGO allies had been invented. The Goldstone report had its origins in the infamous NGO forum of the 2001 UN Durban anti-racism conference, in which the leaders of more than 1,500 groups that have kidnapped the rhetoric of human rights adopted a strategy of demonization of Israel. He should have had the wisdom to reject all manifestations of this political war.

Therefore, it took courage for Goldstone to go against lifelong friends and allies who have misappropriated the flag of human rights, and he should be given credit for this and encouraged to continue in this direction.

By recanting, Goldstone has also exposed the ways the UN-NGO alliance invents "facts" and distorts international law beyond recognition in order to single out Israel. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, B'Tselem, and numerous Palestinian and other groups that use human rights rhetoric provided most of the unverifiable "evidence" used in the Goldstone report. Their exploitation of human rights has now been highlighted for all to see.

In a desperate effort to limit the damage, Kenneth Roth, an obsessive anti-Israel

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ideologue who heads Human Rights Watch, published articles in the Jerusalem Post, the Guardian and the New York Times, attempting to rewrite Goldstone's carefully chosen words. Under Roth, HRW also marketed Gadhafi's "Tripoli spring" and sought funds from Saudi Arabia in order to attack Israel.

This unethical behaviour by powerful NGOs, and their intensive efforts to distort and spin Goldstone's recognition of moral mistakes, is not unique. In 2010, Robert Bernstein, the founder of HRW condemned his own organization and suffered the same type of abuse as Goldstone is now receiving. Bernstein stood fast and refused to be "spun" or reinterpreted, and now Goldstone has joined him in speaking truth to the abuses of NGO power.

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