

Israel Hayom | History likely to repeat itself

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With the end of the ground fighting in the Gaza Strip, Israel should now focus on the fight it faces in the international arena. The naming of a new United Nations Human Rights Council commission of inquiry into Israel's actions during Operation Protective Edge did not come as a surprise -- since the UNHRC was formed in 2006, Israel has been the subject of more investigations than all other U.N. members combined.

The Israeli government has never cooperated with these court-martials -- a prudent policy given each of their disgraceful findings. The 500-page Goldstone Report, on 2008-2009's Operation Cast Lead, and its predecessors were compiled by U.N. "experts" and "investigators," who are mostly affiliated with political nongovernmental organizations that work closely with the UNHRC.

Richard Goldstone himself was closely associated with Human Rights Watch, whose director, Kenneth Roth, has a long history of vocal animosity toward Israel. The Goldstone commission systematically ignored expert testimony that failed to accuse Israel of "war crimes," and it repeatedly refused offers by former commander of the British forces in Afghanistan Col. Richard Kemp -- a renowned counterterrorism expert -- to testify on key issues relevant to the IDF's operations in the Gaza Strip at the time.

The investigation into Operation Protective Edge will probably be similar. Professor William Schabas, who will head the inquiry, has a proven record of anti-Israel statements, and there is little doubt that he will be eager to put his name to almost any anti-Israel report the committee compiles.

The Goldstone commission adamantly ignored the detailed and public reports on Operation Cast Lead by the Israel Defense Forces and the Foreign Ministry, opting instead to base its report on uncorroborated "evidence" provided by a network of anti-Israel organizations.

The Goldstone Report also failed to investigate so much as a single incident of Hamas committing a war crime, nor did it mention -- even once -- the role played by the Iranian and Syrian governments, which supplied Hamas with deadly rockets that were hidden in schools, mosques and hospitals, in clear violation of international law.

Israel's refusal to cooperate with these biased investigations undermines their legitimacy.

After the release of the error-riddled Goldstone report, Goldstone understood that he had been manipulated by the UNHRC team that drafted the findings. In April 2010 he courageously admitted -- in an opinion piece published by the Washington Post -- that the report's findings were baseless.

Had the Israeli government cooperated with the investigation the report would have remained the same, but the international community would have argued that Jerusalem recognized the legitimacy of the commission and its findings, which also would have made it difficult for Goldstone to recant his conclusions.

Israel would be wise to remember these circumstances while it braces for "Goldstone II" or the

commissions of inquiry, as it did with the U.N.'s Palmer commission on the 2010 Mavi Marmara flotilla incident.

The Goldstone process, however, clearly demonstrated that the findings presented by the UNHRC, which is controlled by politically biased officials, are predetermined and set -- whether or not Israel cooperates with the investigation.

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