



**THE HADASSAH
FOUNDATION®**

NCJ TM
National Council of Jewish Women

January 4, 2024

His Excellency
Mr. Antonio Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
760 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
Dear Secretary Guterres:

Cc: Ms. Sima Sami Bahous
Executive Director, UN Women
405 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Cc: Ms. Ana Peláez Narváez
Chairperson, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations
8-14 Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneve 10, Switzerland

Dear Secretary Guterres:

The undersigned 59 organizations collectively call on the United Nations (UN) to conduct an independent, unbiased investigation into the reports and documented evidence of Hamas' rape, mutilation, gender-based violence and murder of Israeli women and girls and prosecute these war crimes to the fullest extent. We also reiterate our call for the UN to demand that Hamas release the hostages it continues to hold, including women and girls, especially given evidence showing horrific levels of continued torture and abuse.

We welcome your recent statement condemning gender-based violence and acknowledging that "accounts of sexual violence during the abhorrent acts of terror by Hamas on October 7 must be vigorously investigated and prosecuted." As UN Women also acknowledged, any investigation into gender-based violence should be conducted "with the rights of the victim at the core." These were critical steps forward, but we remain deeply concerned.

Unfortunately, the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which claims to be charged with conducting the investigation, has a long and clear track record of antisemitism and bias against Israel. The COI chair, Navi Pillay, has repeatedly and falsely

declared Israel to be an “apartheid” state, and promoted discriminatory boycotts against Israel.¹ Commission member Miloon Kothari has made statements to justify terror attacks against Israeli civilians, accused Israel of “ethnic cleansing,” and made comments suggesting that Jews “control” social media.² The COI’s reports have also been criticized for displaying this bias.³

Senior United States leaders share our concern about the COI’s clear bias and history of targeting Israel. US President Biden has “reaffirmed the United States’ strong opposition to the open-ended and biased nature of the UN Commission of Inquiry established in May 2021.”⁴ US Secretary of State Blinken noted that the US “continues to strongly oppose biased and disproportionate treatment of Israel, reflected in the Commission of Inquiry.”⁵ In June 2023, the US issued a joint statement on behalf of 27 countries expressing concern about the Commission’s bias.⁶

The delay by the UN and UN women in condemning Hamas and acknowledging the evidence that Hamas used gender-based violence as a weapon of war against Israeli women cost us crucial time in conducting the investigation, which may affect the collection and analysis of physical evidence. It also undermined the UN’s and UN Women’s credibility as to its role in protecting women across the globe.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women has declared that it works to ensure women’s rights are protected before, during and after conflict.⁷ And UN Women states that one of its four main priorities is to ensure that all women and girls live free from all forms of violence. However, putting the investigation of serious and egregious acts of sexual violence used as a weapon of war into the hands of the biased COI calls into serious question the UN’s intent and ability to conduct a full and impartial investigation, and will force victims and survivors to relive their trauma in an environment that is not safe for them as Israeli women and girls. **Therefore, we call on the UN to establish a truly independent, impartial investigation into these crimes and pursue vigorous prosecution to hold Hamas accountable. This is the very least we can do to ensure justice for Israeli women and girls.**

Sincerely,

Hadassah, The Women’s Zionist Organization of America
The Hadassah Foundation
Jewish Women International
National Council of Jewish Women

¹ UN Watch, “[Request for Navi Pillay to Recuse Herself for Bias or the Appearance Thereof](#),” February 24, 2022.

² US Mission to International Organizations in Geneva, “[Statement on Antisemitic Remarks by a Commissioner of the UN Human Rights Council’s Commission of Inquiry on the Situation in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza](#),” July 28, 2022.

³ Jerusalem Post, “[Jewish organizations denounce UN’s COI report: ‘Distorted and biased’](#)”

⁴ “[Readout of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.’s Meeting with President Isaac Herzog of Israel](#),” October 26, 2022.

⁵ Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, “[UN Human Rights Council Pre-Recorded Statement](#),” March 2, 2023.

⁶ United States Ambassador to the UN Human Rights Council Michele Taylor, “[Joint Statement on the COI of Israel](#),” June 20, 2023.

⁷ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, “[General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations](#),” October 18, 2013.

ADL

ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal

Avoda Shava

Center for Jewish Philanthropy of Greater Phoenix

Center for Women's Justice

Coalition for Jewish Values

Economic Empowerment for Women

Elluminate

Forum Dvora - Women In Foreign Policy and National Security

FWMK Law Office

Hartman Institute

Her Academy: Vocational school for women coming out of prostitution and abuse

HERhealthEQ

Hope Center

I Was Supposed to Have a Baby

International Women Forum - Israel Forum

JCRC Chicago

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia's Women of Vision

Jewish Funders Network

Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance

Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Chicago

Jewish Women's Foundation of Greater Pittsburgh

Jewish Women's Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago

Jewish Women's Foundation of New Jersey

jGirls+ Magazine

Keshet

Lada'at- Choose Well

MERCAZ USA

Moving Traditions

Murder Victims Families Organization

NA'AMAT USA

National Council of Jewish Women of Australia

Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

NOGAFEM- Transforming women's health

NYJA

Project Keshet

Project Keshet Israel

Rabbinical Assembly

Rabbinical Council of America

Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

Seed the Dream Foundation

Task Force on Human Trafficking

The Miriam Fund

The Organization for the Resolution of Agunot (ORA)

T'ruah

TURNING THE TABLES

Union for Reform Judaism

Ve'ahavta Clinic for status less people & refugees

WiSpace Israeli Women In Space Association

Women of Reform Judaism

Women's Rabbinic Network

Yahel - Israel Service Learning

Yesh Tikva

Zioness