



UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



Distr.
GENERAL

A/8164
13 November 1970

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Twenty-fifth session

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI
PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION
OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Letter dated 13 November 1970 from the Permanent Representative of
Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the note by the Secretary-General (A/8089) transmitting to the Members of the General Assembly for their information a report which was submitted to the Secretary-General in accordance with paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 2443 (XXIII) of 19 December 1968.

On instructions of my Government, I should like to request you to be so good as to transmit to the Members of the General Assembly, likewise for their information, the attached statement, dated 2 November 1970, which contains some comments by the Government of Israel on that report.

I have the honour to request that this letter and the attached statement be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Yosef TEKOAH
Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations

STATEMENT

The "Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories" is a body tainted with political bias and procedural irregularity. Since its inception, it has merely served as a tool of Arab propaganda.

The basis for its creation is General Assembly resolution 2443 (XXIII) of 19 December 1968, which was supported by a minority of Member States, almost all Arab or pro-Arab. In view of the one-sided character of the resolution and as it prejudged the issues the Special Committee was to investigate, all uncommitted States that were approached refused to serve on the Committee. The only countries willing to become members of the Committee were Somalia, Yugoslavia and Ceylon. All three have no diplomatic relations with Israel and have identified themselves with Arab hostility towards Israel. Somalia even denies Israel's right to independence and sovereignty.

The activities of the Committee have been in line with its composition. Passing over the fact that objective Governments and organizations were generally unwilling to co-operate with it, the Committee proceeded to organize a spectacle of hearing "evidence" from witnesses, most of whom were supplied by the Arab Governments and organizations. The result is a compilation of dated and already refuted Arab propaganda allegations and distortions.

The long list of pre-selected, coached and rehearsed witnesses presented to the Committee produced lurid and often pathological tales of alleged ill-treatment and atrocity.

As an illustration, it is enough to mention the evidence of Mohammed Derbas, who appeared before the Committee in Cairo on 23 April 1970. He described very vividly how, following the 1967 war, he was forced into an Israeli hospital in Haifa and there castrated by an Israeli doctor, who was assisted by an Israeli nurse. What in fact happened was that for medical reasons Derbas had undergone two operations for the removal of his testicles. These were performed by Arab surgeons, in the Gaza Strip, in 1965 and 1966, respectively (that is, prior to the 1967 hostilities). Already in July 1966, he had arrived in Egypt in an illusory hope of a remedy by transplantation, as recorded in a medical report by an Egyptian professor dated 28 July 1966. The report, signed by Professor Muhamad Safawat, is in this Mission's possession. This episode clearly demonstrates how human misfortune is exploited for cheap propaganda.

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The Committee was not in a position to evaluate any evidence, to expose fabrications or to punish perjury. It is clear that this was an organized propaganda exercise, wanting in minimal judicial guarantees. No valid conclusions can be drawn from it, least of all against a State Member of the United Nations, and the inclusion of such material in a United Nations document does a grave disservice to the Organization itself. Fact finding on disputed matters requires the highest standards of objectivity. Otherwise, as in this case, the results are not entitled to belief, and the United Nations is converted into a vehicle for political warfare.

It has been the consistent policy of the Government of Israel, in accordance with the existing legal procedures, to investigate every complaint of abuse or improper conduct by members of the Defence Forces or other authorities in the Israel-administered territories. Such investigations can be conducted only if proper complaints are lodged and the possibilities created of taking evidence with due safeguards.

Israel has nothing to conceal in the discharge of its responsibilities for the safety and welfare of the inhabitants in Israel-administered territories. These areas are open to the outside world. Hundreds of thousands of visitors move freely around in them and can observe conditions for themselves.

The "Special Committee" report cannot blur the true situation of the civilian population in areas under Israel's administration. Israel's liberal policy, the freedoms enjoyed by the inhabitants of these areas to a degree unparalleled in most Arab States, the normalcy of life and the economic progress achieved in the last three years are a matter of record. This is attested, among others, by the fact that, during this summer alone, over 55,000 tourists from Arab countries entered Israel and the administered areas to visit relatives and friends. These Arab visitors would not have come had they given any credence to the official Arab propaganda of the kind contained in the Committee's report.

No amount of falsification can dim the truth that the Israel administration is as humane, equitable and constructive as can be conceived in the situation and that - notwithstanding intimidation and incitement, such as are diffused by the Committee's report and its records of testimony - the population as a whole

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leads a remarkably tranquil and prosperous life, with schools open, services functioning, work available, agriculture and commerce flourishing, marketing organized, health cared for and movement uninhibited.

Israel and other Member States rejected the resolution setting up the so-called "Special Committee". Not only did that resolution dictate to the Special Committee in advance the very conclusions that the Committee was to reach, but it deliberately ignored the real problem of discrimination and violation of human rights which exists in the Middle East, namely, the mistreatment of Jewish communities in Arab lands. The plight of those communities was deliberately excluded from the Special Committee's terms of reference. It is a matter of common knowledge that innocent Jews in certain Arab countries are maltreated in gaols and concentration camps, deprived of their liberty, human dignity and property, held as hostages and denied the right to depart. No United Nations organ has concerned itself with their fate.

For these reasons, the Government of Israel did not find it possible to extend its co-operation or facilities to the Special Committee, and has no intention of entering upon a debate on the details of the "evidence" taken or the conclusions reached by the Special Committee.

A peaceful settlement in the Middle East will be attained through the incessant search for understanding between the parties to the conflict and not by acrimonious propaganda manoeuvres.

2 November 1970
