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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE CHARTER OF THE
UNITED NATIONS AND ON THE STRENGTHENING OF THE ROLE
OF THE ORGANIZATION

Letter dated 25 February 1986 from the Permanent Representative of
Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As you recall, I promised to give you a report on defamatory attacks against Israel and the Jewish People during the fortieth session of the General Assembly. (I will not refer here to open calls for religious war against Israel in the Security Council.) I regret to say that, despite a relative improvement in the pattern of votes on issues relating to Israel, the news is not good when it comes to public statements by some delegates. In fact, the campaign of anti-Semitic ¹/_{and anti-Israel} slander has reached levels never before experienced in the United Nations.

* A/41/50.

¹/_{The terms "anti-Semitism", "anti-Semite" and anti-Semitic" are used throughout this letter within their commonly accepted meaning, denoting hostility to Jews (cf., The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English).}

Some of the utterances voiced by a number of delegations range from injurious name-calling to racial and religious incitement. Examples of the former are the designation of Israel as a "cancerous Zionist entity" (Iran, 37th plenary meeting, 16 October 1985 (see A/40/PV.37)) or as "the Zionist Israeli monster" (PLO, 87th plenary meeting, 21 November 1985 (see A/40/PV.87)). In previous years, Presidents of the General Assembly and Chairmen of the various committees have insisted that each State should be referred to by the name it bears as a United Nations member, as in fact did President de Piniés on one occasion; such intervention should be regarded as standard procedure.

An unusually ominous aspect of this verbal escalation is the wilful attempt to deny, minimize and distort the reality and significance of the Holocaust, thus echoing themes and slogans currently spread by neo-Nazi organizations. To this category belong expressions such as "the so-called Holocaust" (Syria, 16th meeting, 29 October 1985 (see A/SPC/40/PV.16)), "so-called anti-Semitism" (Kuwait, Special Political Committee, 17th meeting, 30 October 1985 (see A/SPC/40/PV.17)) or the assertion that the Jews in Europe were sent into concentration camps by the Zionists (Iran, Special Political Committee, 21st meeting, 31 October 1985 (see A/SPC/40/PV.21)). A particularly shocking instance of this abusive language was the statement calling the Prime Minister of Israel a "neo-Nazi whose hands are still dripping with the blood of innocent Palestinian and other children", and also one of the "collaborators with the Nazis [who] should be summoned to appear before a resumed Nuremberg trial" (PLO, 37th plenary meeting, 16 October 1985 (A/40/PV.37)).

Classical anti-Semitism, the fomenting of hostility and hatred against Jews throughout the world, was also very much in evidence during the fortieth session of the General Assembly, such as in the statement made by the Saudi representative on 20 November 1985, in which he accused "Zionist ... supporters in senates and parliaments" of acting in favour of "South Africa's racist regime" and of trying to "justify its crimes" (see A/40/PV.84).

But perhaps the best illustration of this incitement came from Ms. Al-Zayani of Bahrain who said on 25 November 1985 in the Third Committee debate on (of all things) the elimination of religious intolerance that "the Jews had killed Jesus Christ". The Catholic Church of course rejected the doctrine of deicide in the Second Vatican Council and the Pontifical Encyclical "Nostra Aetate". Other Christian denominations have done likewise. At this age-old vilification has now been resurrected in the United Nations, an Organization dedicated under the Charter to the promotion of human rights, "without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion". Even more appalling is the fact that such vulgar, unabashed anti-Semitism reared its head only a few weeks after the celebrations of the founding of the United Nations and the victory over Nazism.

These outpourings of hate fly in the face of explicit injunctions against religious incitement set by United Nations international conventions. Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights clearly spells this out: "Any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law". Similarly, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination establishes in article 4 that any incitement "against any race or group of persons of one colour or ethnic origin" is considered an offense punishable by law.

The United Nations General Assembly must not become a stage for acts which constitute, under the express provisions of international instruments, offenses punishable by law.

This deterioration in norms warrants the most scrupulous adherence to the Charter of the United Nations, and to the rules of procedure, particularly articles 35 and 68. At issue is not only the orderly conduct of debate but the fidelity of the United Nations to its founding principle.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under items 12, 37, 97 and 136 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Benjamin NETANYAHU
Ambassador
