

A BLAST FROM THE PAST:

THE UPCOMING DURBAN III CONFERENCE (SEPTEMBER 2011)

Alan Baker

Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, August 15, 2011

Introduction

There is no doubt that the necessity to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance is one of the major challenges of the organized international community. In fact, this has been a central and principal aim of the United Nations since its establishment, and is even enunciated in the first article of the UN Charter setting out the purposes of the organization as, inter alia, “promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.” One might thus assume that this task would be taken seriously and handled by the organization with all due reverence and consideration.

However, one of the most regrettable, disappointing, and damaging phenomena of the first decade of the third millennium has been the utter failure of the international community in general, and the United Nations in particular, to deal in a genuine and sincere manner with the evils of racism.

Even more regrettable is the fact that the one attempt by the international community to deal with racism, at the 2001 Durban Conference, was allowed to be usurped, politicized, and manipulated into becoming a bitter, racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Israel hate-fest that left a permanent stain on any such attempts by the international community to deal with the substantive issue of racism.

But no less damaging was the endorsement given at the Durban event to a global campaign to delegitimize the State of Israel within the international community. This damage is immeasurable, and its effects continue to the present day.

Durban I

The 2001 Durban Conference, the very forum that might perhaps have originally been intended to deal with these issues in a substantive and serious manner, has sadly and irreparably become a by-word for bitter racism, intolerance, hatred, anti-Semitism, and Israel-bashing, and nothing more.

Indeed, what should have ostensibly been a serious and well-meaning get-together of the leadership and experts of virtually all countries of the world at the first major international diplomatic conference of the third millennium, convened on the African continent which has suffered so much from slavery and racism, tragically became indelibly stained and ruined because of an irrepressible and irresistible urge by the leaders of Arab and Muslim states, Iran, the PLO, and a group of non-governmental organizations with an anti-Israel agenda. This group deliberately set out to hijack the conference and treat it as if it were a routine UN General Assembly session, turning it into an anti-Israel and anti-Semitic hate-fest, at the expense of all the other substantive, relevant, and important agenda items, and under the nose of a naïve and lethargic international community.

The initial conference documentation, developed through a series of regional conferences, expert seminars, and a formal preparatory committee, and placed before the conferees at the opening of the conference, contained a series of bracketed paragraphs dealing with “Zionist racist practices against Semitism,” describing Israel as a “racist, apartheid state,” accusing Israel of “ethnic cleansing of the Arab population in historic Palestine,” calling for revoking legislation in Israel based on racial or religious discrimination, such as the Law of Return, and downgrading of the term “Holocaust” with multiple references to “holocausts” suffered by other peoples, including the Palestinians—a clear affront to the memory of the Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Similarly, the Draft Program of Action called to end the “foreign occupation of Jerusalem by Israel, together with all its racist practices” and called upon all states to refrain from recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

If these were not sufficient indications of the inherent and prevalent bias

that had been injected into the very substantive theme of the conference, one need only review the official opening statements made by several world leaders in order to grasp the extent to which the conference, from the start, had been tainted and polluted.

Yasser Arafat appeared at this official UN diplomatic conference as both “President of the State of Palestine” (in contravention of the UN resolution determining the observer status of the Palestinian representation) and President of the Palestine “National” Authority (in stark violation of the terms of the 1995 Israel-Palestinian Interim Agreement). Despite having signed the Oslo Accords with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin only six years prior to this conference, Arafat couched his criticism of Israel in such hostile, demagogic, and pugnacious terms as “a racist colonialist conspiracy of aggression, forced eviction, usurpation of land and infringement upon Christian and Islamic holy places,” and a “colonialist challenge against international legitimacy,” “moved by a mentality of superiority that practices racial discrimination, that adopts ethnic cleansing and transfer.”

Other paragons of international virtue such as Fidel Castro of Cuba, Kamal Kharrazi, Iran’s foreign minister, and Amr Moussa, Secretary-General of the Arab League, called respectively to “put an end to the ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people,” defined Zionism as “the most vivid manifestation of institutionalized racism,” and condemned “Israeli colonial settlement in Palestine and Arab territories” attempting to “impose an alleged supremacy of one people over other peoples,” which he termed the “worst form of racism.”

Even Assad Shoman, the UN Ambassador of Belize, of all countries, found himself joining the lynch, declaring:

No one can deny that the lives of Palestinians under occupation are as much ruled by racism as were the people of South Africa under apartheid, with the added aggravation that many Palestinians have been expelled completely from their land and denied the right to return.

In the name of the Palestinian and the Israeli people, Arabs and Jews alike, let us now take up the Palestinian cause as we did the anti-

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apartheid cause, for by doing so we will be helping both Palestinians and Israelis to rid themselves of this scourge, and we will be advancing the cause of all peoples who suffer from racism and discrimination.

After both Israel and the U.S. walked out of the Durban I conference on its fourth day, and following extensive criticism leveled by other countries that chose not to walk out, especially the Europeans, Australia and Canada, the organizers of the conference decided, in consultation with European and other responsible states, to redraft the conference documentation with a view to removing the offensive references and restoring the accentuation on the substantive and genuine issues of combating racism.

Ultimately, in the final adopted texts, all references to Zionism, degrading of the Holocaust, and other anti-Semitic elements were removed, despite the strong and vocal opposition of Iran, Syria, and others. Instead, the conference called upon the international community never to forget the Holocaust and acknowledged the increase in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

However, at the insistence of the Arab and Muslim delegations, one provision was nevertheless inserted, clearly singling out and directed against Israel.... [Ed.-See 'On Topics,' below, for continuation of this text.]

**U.N. 'ANTI-RACISM' CONFERENCE
BRINGING UNSEEMLY CHARACTERS TO NEW YORK**

Anne Bayefsky

Weekly Standard, August 17, 2011

Plans for the U.N.'s "anti-racism" event known as Durban III, which will be held in New York City on September 22, 2011, just got a whole lot uglier. A new draft of the final declaration that U.N. organizers hope will be adopted by over a hundred world leaders, who will be on hand for the annual opening of the General Assembly, is now circulating. And a coalition of extremist non-governmental organizations has announced

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plans to spend four days in New York around the time of the event to champion a pointed message: Zionism is racism, which fits with the Durban Declaration, adopted in South Africa in 2001 that charged Israel-and only Israel-with racism.

The United States and Israel walked out of the notorious 2001 anti-Semitic hatefest, and ever since, the U.N. has been trying to legitimize it. Durban II, held in Geneva in April 2009, “reaffirmed” the Durban Declaration but was boycotted for that reason by the United States, Canada, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Italy, Poland, the Czech Republic, and the Netherlands.

Durban III is intended to be the resurrection campaign. Hence, the draft political declaration states: “We, heads of State and Government...stress that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action [DDPA] adopted in 2001 as well as the Outcome Document of the Durban Review Conference in 2009, provide the most comprehensive United Nations framework and solid foundation for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.”

The United States, Israel, Canada, the Czech Republic, Italy, and the Netherlands have already pulled out of Durban III. But, surprisingly, many other countries, such as Germany, are still sitting on the fence. At the last round of negotiations over the wording of the final declaration, which took place in July, the German representative made a commitment: He promised that singling out individual countries or “reaffirming” the declaration or outcome of Durban I and II would be “clearly unacceptable.” Now we wait to find out if Germany has the courage of its alleged 21st century convictions. Poland should make up its decision now, too, for similar reasons. Australia, desperately seeking a seat on the Security Council, is trembling off-stage knowing that Canada was defeated at the last vote for Council seats because of its refusal to be intimidated by the powerful Islamic front at the U.N. And the United Kingdom and France have run out of excuses.

The diplomatic chicanery has left the field wide open for Durban III fans. Which explains why a “Durban + 10 Coalition” of at least 32 non-governmental organizations is busy planning events surrounding the

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conference in New York “to honor the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the DDPA.” Their self-described intention is to “stand opposed to the slander...against the DDPA...by the United States, Canada, Israel and several members of the European Union...to suppress the rights and demands of the many groups protected by the Durban Declaration, including...the Palestinian people.”

The 2010 General Assembly resolution authorizing Durban III says the theme of the event will be “victims of racism.” The final draft declaration demands that participating countries “proclaim together our strong determination to make the fight against racism...and the protection of the victims thereof a high priority for our countries.” And the Durban Declaration maintains that Palestinians are victims of Israeli racism.

Hence, the “Durban + 10 coalition” includes such “human rights” exemplars as the “U.S. Palestinian Community Network” and the “International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network.” The website of the former NGO declares, “Israel is an apartheid state.” The latter’s website says, “Zionism, in all its forms, must be stopped.... We pledge to: oppose Zionism and the state of Israel. Zionism is racist.... It continues a long history of Zionist collusion with repressive and violent regimes, from Nazi Germany to the South African Apartheid regime....” Jews become Nazis, in this twisted frame of reference.

In other words, for those states still pretending that the Durban Declaration and its progeny, including Durban III, are the right venue to commit themselves to the fight against racism, there is no wiggle room left. Are they in or out? For or against anti-Semitism?

Not coincidentally, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will be speaking at the U.N. General Assembly on the same day as Durban III. The Iranian president was the only head of state to attend Durban II. His enthusiasm for the Durban Declaration is something of a stumbling block to U.N. legitimatization plans. So, interestingly, U.N. officials are apparently attempting to juggle the timing of Ahmadinejad’s speech by inserting another event into the General Assembly hall at his expected speaking time. If the announced speakers stick to the schedule, it will likely force him into a slot later in the day.

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So what suitable meeting did U.N. folks decide should precede Ahmadinejad? A “high-level meeting on nuclear safety and security.” Too clever by half. Now a rabid racist who is bent on acquiring nuclear weapons will grace the scene of the Durban III festivities and likely mount the podium shortly after a U.N. spectacle billed as saving the planet from nuclear catastrophe.

Nobody should be laughing, especially when one considers that this debacle will take place shortly after the ten-year anniversary of September 11, 2001.

(Anne Bayefsky is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a professor at Touro College, and the editor of EYEontheUN.org.)

MOBILIZING AGAINST DURBAN III

Josee Chiasson

FrontPage, August 19, 2011

The 2011 Durban Review Conference, known as Durban III, has been billed as a continuation of the 2001 and 2009 United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance previously held in Durban, South Africa and Geneva, Switzerland. Both previous conferences failed to meet their stated objectives of addressing issues...[but rather] degenerate[ed] instead into a tribunal which demonized and singled out one nation. Anyone would guess that perhaps that nation would be Sudan, China, Saudi Arabia or perhaps North Korea. But it was Israel, the lone democracy in the Middle-East, the one nation among its neighbours where religious and ethnic minorities are flourishing and where there is free press, free speech and women's rights....

We are in a moment in history where standing up against anti-Semitism is not only necessary but long over-due. Those who cannot remember, who consciously ignore or refuse to learn from the past are condemned to repeat it. Unfortunately, in the case of the Durban conferences, the

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international community has refused to learn from the first conference and have allowed for a repeat of this anti-Semitic platform again in Geneva and now in the United States. As international leaders gather at the United Nations to condemn Israel and the Jewish people, we, as North Americans and as participants of a global community, have the responsibility to speak out before anti-Semitism at the United Nations turns into violence and history repeats itself.

Holding to the facts of history has never been so important as leaders like Ahmadinejad, the Iranian president, works to influence public opinion by distorting the facts. This Holocaust-denier has used the Durban conference to minimize the atrocities that occurred in the Holocaust. Ahmadinejad not only denies the systematic killing and genocide of 6 million Jews through horrific and inhumane measures, but is also working hard to propagate the delegitimization and demonization of Israel. For instance, at Durban II in 2009, he claimed that Zionism is “a kind of racism that has tarnished the image of humanity”; that Zionism “personifies racism” and that the international community should do everything possible to “eradicate” the Zionist “regime”. Adolf Hitler also believed that the world should address a Jewish conspiracy and stated in Mein Kampf that “the personification of the devil as the symbol of all evil assumes the living shape of the Jew.” It is difficult to deny the parallel between the statements made by Ahmadinejad in 2009 and Adolf Hitler’s statements in his 1925 publication....

The international community is predominantly silent and in some cases outwardly supportive of the UN’s policies towards Israel and of the Durban III conference. [However], a broad coalition of over 30 organizations both religious and secular, led by The Coalition for True Justice, Jerusalem Institute of Justice, Eagles’ Wings, Stand With Us, EYEontheUN.org, and many others, are choosing to respond to the Durban III Conference and not be silent. Based on their shared values and commitment to support the welfare and security of the democratic state of Israel, the above organizations invite people everywhere to join them in mobilizing support for Israel at the United Nations....

On September 20th at 7:00pm an organized prayer rally for Christians and anyone interested will be taking place at the Crenshaw Christian Centre East in New York City where dozens of leaders, prayer networks

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and hundreds of Christians will gather to show support for Israel.... On September 21st, a protest against Durban III will take place at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza from 11AM-2PM where people of all backgrounds will show support for Israel. Leaders from a wide spectrum of political and religious perspectives will be speaking at the event. On September 22nd, The Perils of Global Intolerance: The United Nations and Durban III Conference presented by The Hudson Institute and Touro College Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust will address the question of "what happens when a group of states collude to corrupt the meaning of human rights...." Among some of the speakers at this conference are: Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, John Bolton, a former US Ambassador to the UN and Mike Huckabee, the former Governor of Arkansas among many others....

I believe we all have a responsibility to respond to the assault on Israel in the international community.... The enemies of Israel are also enemies of our Western values and culture.... As a Christian woman I often hear about my religion's dark anti-Semitic past of persecuting Jews.... However, today I and many others have the opportunity to say that we will not repeat history but rather we will stand up for what is right and support the Jews by standing for Israel in this critical moment in history. People often ask the question "if I was there what would I have done" when they visit Yad Vashem or some type of Holocaust memorial. Today, we don't have to ask what we would have done in the 1930s and 40s, we have to ask what we are doing now!?

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She is a current intern with a pro-Israel Christian organization, Eagles' Wings, where she is the coordinating administrator of a protest to confront Durban III at the United Nations.)