



**THE HADASSAH
FOUNDATION®**



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 & refuges

WiSpace Israeli Women In Space Association

Women of Reform Judaism

Women's Rabbinic Network

Yahel - Israel Service Learning

Yesh Tikva

Zioness