



Opening Statement from Jackie Goodall to JCFAD re Amnesty report, Tuesday 5th April 2022

I would like to thank the Chair and members of this committee for inviting the Ireland Israel Alliance to counter Amnesty International's report that charges Israel with apartheid against Palestinians. By employing this very distinct term, a term that elicits powerful emotions within peoples and states, we believe the report to be a tactical step in part of a much broader strategy of delegitimisation, to both deny Israel the right to defend itself, and to terminate its existence as the nation state of the Jewish people.

I am joined by two fellow members of the Alliance, former Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, and voluntary Chair of Magen David Adom Ireland, Alan Shatter, and author of 'Hey Ireland Israel's On The Line: Are We Prepared For A Potential Holocaust', Audrey Griffin. I am also joined, remotely from New York, by Yousef Haddad, a private Arab Israeli citizen of Israel and CEO of 'Together - Vouch for Us', an Israeli NGO that seeks to create better understanding and co-operation between Israeli Arabs and Israeli Jews.

Let me begin by reminding the committee that the Ireland Israel Alliance, an entirely voluntarily run, non-profit organisation, was established in 2018 because a growing number of Irish citizens - from across the political spectrum and from all religious backgrounds and none - were, and continue to be, of the opinion that the pervasive narrative circulating in the Irish public arena regarding Israel, was, and still is, disproportionately focused against Israel. Our objective remains to bring more balance to that narrative and to make a constructive contribution to the debate.

On that note, I would like to thank Taoiseach Micheál Martin and the Irish Government for refusing to adopt Amnesty's outrageous apartheid depiction, a depiction that is entirely divorced from the reality on the ground, is a gross distortion of truth, and is employed to demonise and delegitimise the Israeli state.

Ireland is not alone in taking this stand, as the United States, Germany, United Kingdom, Austria, the Czech Republic, Australia, Canada, Netherlands and France also reject Amnesty's charge, as have organisations and individuals across the world, including Mansour Abbas, leader of the Arab Muslim Nationalist party that forms part of Israel's own governing coalition. I will defer shortly to Yoseph Haddad, himself an Israeli Arab, who will speak regarding this reality.

The Amnesty report has essentially repackaged the ideologically inspired claims of the 'Human Rights Watch' and 'B'Tselem' reports that preceded it; baseless, ideologically motivated claims that are in reality an impediment to peace between Arabs and Jews in the region.

It is worth noting that the founder of Human Rights Watch, Robert Bernstein, who for several decades was president of Random House, one of the most prestigious publishers in the United States, published an article in the New York Times in 2009 strongly criticising the organisation he founded for ignoring serious human rights violations in closed societies; for its anti-Israel



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bias and for [start quote] “issuing reports... that are helping those who wish to turn Israel into a pariah state” [end quote].

That B’Tselem’s similar report comes from an Israeli NGO serves to illustrate that far from being the oppressive, apartheid state B’Tselem claims it to be, Israel continues to ‘ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex, guaranteeing freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture’, as outlined in Israel’s Declaration of Independence of May 1948.

I would encourage anyone here who may not have already read the Declaration, to do so. It appealed for peace and extended a hand of friendship to all Israel’s neighbouring Arab States, which was in turn rejected by all of them in 1948, and led to Israel being forced to fight the first of many defensive wars.

Most disturbingly of all are Amnesty’s ‘recommendations’, beginning on p.272 of the 280 page report. To say that they are effectively calling for the dismantling of the State of Israel, may not be immediately obvious to some, but take a closer look.

Amnesty advocates for the ‘right of return’ of some 5.7 million ‘Palestinian refugees’ to Israel, a country slightly smaller than the province of Munster, and which if implemented, would effectively mean the elimination of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people. In Amnesty’s distorted view, every descendent of the original 750,000 Palestinians who fled Israel during the 1948 war should be granted a ‘right of return’, a demand not supported by international law.

Amnesty also calls for a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel, including ‘security equipment’. This sounds very much like a call for Israel to be denied the capacity to defend itself when attacked, and an objection to Israel maintaining its Iron Dome Air Defence System – a system that intercepted up to 90% of over 4,300 Hamas rockets fired indiscriminately into Israeli cities over an 11-day period last May, and which saved the lives of countless Jews, Arabs and other minorities alike.

At a time when many Arab countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco are developing closer commercial and defence ties with Israel, and relations between Arabs and Jews are flourishing in many parts of the Middle East, it is tragic that Amnesty, on the heel of two similarly ideologically motivated NGOs, would produce a report that foments distrust and inflames existing tensions within Israel and the disputed territories, ignores Palestinian rejectionism and whitewashes its violence, and via the misuse of the emotionally charged apartheid label, advocates for the dismantling of the State of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people.

Thank you.