

Oral statement pronounced by Moishe Smith on 22 March 2007 on behalf of

**B'nai B'rith International and the Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations (CBJO)**

Mr President:

On behalf of B'nai B'rith International and CBJO, let me comment on the paper just introduced by Mr John Dugard, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. This paper is a tired repetition of a long string of unilateral accusations levelled against Israel by the Special Rapporteur. The former German Foreign Minister once said that he who places all the blame for the Middle East conflict on one side, shows thereby that he understands nothing about this conflict. Mr Dugard's paper fits that description. In his lengthy text depicting Israeli measures to defend its citizens from suicide and other terrorist attacks, such as the much-criticized barrier, the author does not find space for a single mention of these attacks coming from the West Bank and only half of sentence regarding the on-going Qassem attacks fired from Gaza. His criticism of the alleged "siege" of Gaza makes no reference to the withdrawal of the IDF from Gaza in August 2005, even though "foreign occupation" is described as one of Israel's three cardinal sins, along with colonialism and apartheid. In his exuberance to tag Israel with the racist label, the author even resorts to Nazi vocabulary by describing the Jews as a "racial" group in opposition to a so-called Palestinian "racial" group. Given the worldwide rise of anti-Semitism such language in a UN document is welcome food for those who seek to denigrate Jews on account of their "racial" characteristics.

Mr President, the long record of one-sidedness demonstrated by the Special Rapporteur and often criticized by us in this chamber would be bad enough, but it is being compounded by the attempt of certain country groups to single out Mr Dugard's mandate for virtual perpetuity in contrast to all other mandates which were extended for only one year. The singling out of this mandate prejudices the review process to which all other mandates are being subjected by this Council. This is perhaps the most blatant violation of the principles of non-selectivity unanimously supported by all member and non-member countries at the very first session of this new Council.

The one-sidedness of this mandate can only serve to perpetuate the conflict, not to solve it. Furthermore this mandate dating back to 1993 takes no account of developments since then, such as the Oslo process, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and leaves out of account human rights violations occurring within the context of inter-Palestinian violence.

Mr. President, we recommend that the Council reject this selective approach, to balance the mandate and to permit another person with a fresh and more objective approach to assume the task of Special Rapporteur, thereby encouraging Israel to co-operate in this endeavour, something that cannot be expected as long as Mr Dugard remains in the job, for which he has disqualified himself.

Thank you, Mr President.