**The Durban Perversion**

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The United Nations hosted a full-day celebration on September 22nd commemorating the tenth anniversary of one of its greatest embarrassments since its founding: the adoption of the so-called Durban I Declaration and Programme of Action. This Declaration was the final outcome document of the 2001 anti-Semitic, anti-Western hatefest known formally as the UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. It singled out the Palestinians as the victims of alleged Israeli racism. And the Holocaust deniers who were running Durban I refused to include any reference to the twentieth century’s most vile example of racism, genocide and crimes against humanity.

The “Durban III” self-congratulatory anniversary conference resulted in a consensus reaffirmation of the Durban I Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as the Outcome Document of the Durban II Review Conference adopted in 2009 – the conference Iranian President Ahmadinejad opened with an attack on Israel, which he called the most racist country in the world.

Expecting the anti-Israel, anti-Western agenda to continue at the Durban III conference, thirteen nations decided to boycott the conference – New Zealand, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, Austria, Germany, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Poland (which is currently heading the European Union), Israel, and the United States. However, that left 180 UN member states that took no such action against this obscene perversion of the concepts of true anti-racism, tolerance and human rights.

Anne Bayefsky, Hudson Institute senior fellow and director of the Touro College Institute on Human Rights & the Holocaust, correctly pointed out that there is a direct link between the UN’s Durban III gathering on September 22nd and the General Assembly address of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas the following day seeking full state recognition and membership in the United Nations.

“It’s clear that this is intended to be a one-two action: You label Israel racist, and then the next day you say you don’t have to negotiate with it,” Bayefsky said. “Durban is not about combating racism, it is about demonizing Jews and the Jewish state.”

Durban III continued the propaganda campaign waged by the Palestinians and their friends in the United Nations to delegitimize Israel. However, at first glance, if one did not know its historical context, the Durban III final statement would seem perfectly benign. Its surface message is that racism and related acts of intolerance and discrimination occur on a daily basis all around the world. It calls for increased action and accelerated implementation of measures to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The authors of the statement made it as plain vanilla as possible in order to attract as many supporters as they could. Iran did not play a visible role in the planning of the conference this time. Its minister of foreign affairs, Ali Akbar Salehi, filled in at the conference for President Ahmadinejad, who saved his vile remarks for a speech he delivered to the UN General Assembly on the same day as Durban III. Ahmadinejad predictably repeated his golden oldies from past UN speeches, including his Zionist conspiracy theories and questioning who was behind 9/11.

But Ahmadinejad knew that Durban III would achieve its sinister objectives by stealth – reaffirming previous anti-racism world conference declarations going back to 1978 that had expressly promoted the Palestinians’ false narrative that they were the victims of Israeli racism and apartheid. This was just a few years after the UN General Assembly had equated Zionism with racism. While that toxic resolution was revoked in 1991, the campaign to delegitimize the right of Jews to have a single state of their own in their own historic homeland continues.

The first World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination was held in Geneva back in 1978.  In its Declaration and Programmes of Action, this conference concluded that “[A]partheid, the extreme form of institutionalized racism, is a crime against humanity and an affront to the dignity of mankind and is a threat to peace and security in the world.” While it focused attention on the apartheid regime of South Africa, this document specifically linked Israel to that regime and condemned “the insidious propaganda by the Government of Israel and its zionist and other supporters against the United Nations organs and against Governments which had advocated firm action against apartheid.”   One paragraph accused Israel of practicing “diverse forms of racial discrimination against Palestinians affecting all aspects of their daily lives in a manner which prevents their enjoyment of their elementary human rights on a basis of equality.”

This declaration, written in 1978, decried “the cruel tragedy which befell the Palestinian people 30 years ago and which the (sic) continue to endure– manifested in their being prevented from exercising their right to self-determination on the soil of their homeland, in the dispersal of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, the prevention of their return to their homes…”

The second World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, also held in Geneva, took place in August 1983 and repeated the same rhetoric. It called for “the cessation of all the practices of racial discrimination to which the Palestinians and other inhabitants of the Arab territories occupied by Israel are subjected.”

In 1997, the UN General Assembly called for a World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to take place no later than 2001.

Iran led the planning for the United Nations’ 2001 Durban I Conference. The Durban I Declaration, which the UN member states participating in Durban III just reaffirmed, referenced all the prior anti-Israel declarations from the previous UN-sponsored world conferences against racism mentioned above.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation and its allies in the non-aligned movement held sway at Durban I, and the Palestinians were singled out as victims of racism. In fact, the “anti-racist” Durban I conference turned into a racist hatefest against the Jewish state. It was marked by vitriolic displays of anti-Semitism, which were so bad that the United States walked out of the conference.

Iran headed up preparations for the equally biased follow-up Durban II Review Conference in 2009. Several delegates, mostly from the European Union, walked out during Ahmadinejad’s speech. Most delegates, however, not only remained for the speech, but applauded at its conclusion. Fortunately, the United States, along with Australia, Canada, Germany, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Poland, had boycotted the whole conference, rightly sensing in advance that something like this would happen.

It is this litany of lies that the Durban III conference has decided to reaffirm. The common theme running through the litany is that Israel’s “neo-colonialist” Zionist regime should be isolated by the international community for committing alleged “racist crimes” against the “oppressed” Palestinian victims.

Nevertheless, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay voiced their strong support for this perversion of human rights and platform for the world’s worst human rights abusers, which has characterized the whole Durban process from the start.

With a straight face, Navi Pillay actually said that the Durban I Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as the outcome of the 2009 Durban II Review, provide a “comprehensive framework to address the scourge of racism.” Did she bother to take a look at the list of dictatorships that were given a forum to spew their hate and hypocrisy? Does she really consider, for example, that the racist Arab regime of Sudan, which has embarked on a campaign of murdering, ethnically cleansing and enslaving millions of indigenous black Africans – a campaign that continues today – is committed to addressing the scourge of racism? Apparently the organizers of the Durban III conference thought so, since Sudan was given the honor of addressing the conference on behalf of the Group of African States. Since Sudanese President Omar Hassan Ahmad Al-Bashir was facing arrest on warrants issued for five counts of crimes against humanity (murder, extermination, forcible transfer, torture and rape) and two counts of war crimes (pillaging and intentionally directing attacks against civilians), it would have been a bit risky for him to make a personal appearance.

The honors went to Rahamtalla Mohamed Osman Elnor, Sudan’s undersecretary, ministry of Foreign Affairs, who complained about  – what else — the transatlantic slave trade.  He said that the African Group for whom he spoke welcomed the actions undertaken to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the end of the transatlantic slave trade and the establishment of a permanent memorial at United Nations Headquarters.

The Sudanese undersecretary also threw in apartheid, colonialism and what he called the “new and emerging forms of slavery such as human trafficking.”

If only the United Nations would have had the moral courage to have invited to the Durban III podium, instead of Bashir’s mouthpiece, a heroic Sudanese refugee and survivor of child slavery in Sudan. Kudos to Anne Bayefsky for organizing a conference of sanity and truth across the street on the same day as the Durban III circus, at which this Sudanese refugee, Simon Deng, was given an opportunity to speak.

At the counter-Durban III conference, titled “The Perils of Global Intolerance: The United Nations and Durban III,” Mr. Deng told of how he was nine years old when he was enslaved by an Arab family. He was forced to work around the clock, beaten, and subject to harsh living conditions for three years. Mr. Deng was not alone. Hundreds of thousands of Sudanese have been kidnapped and sold into slavery. Here was a living demonstration of the “emerging forms of slavery such as human trafficking,” perpetrated within Sudan by the racist Arab government and population, which Sudan’s undersecretary so piously condemned at the Durban III conference.

Mr. Deng managed to escape permanent enslavement, but thousands of other blacks in Sudan remain in slavery. The UN, he said, knew about the Arab enslavement of black Sudanese and the Arab government’s policy of apartheid against the black population, but chose to do nothing. His fellow blacks and other persecuted minorities were abandoned by the UN, Mr. Deng said, in favor of giving the racist Arabs a global platform to persistently push their false accusations of Israeli racism against the Palestinians.

By ignoring the true victims of racism, such as Simon Deng, and providing a platform to the racists themselves to excoriate Israel and other democracies, the United Nations has forfeited whatever moral authority and legitimacy it may have had at its founding.