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From Dreyfus to Goldstone

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The 1895 prosecution and conviction of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French army, under fabricated charges of treason was a decisive event.

It was the product of anti-Semitism – fuelled by the Catholic Church and compounded by political manipulation and media hysteria – and it took 11 years before the truth was finally revealed and Dreyfus was exonerated.



More than a century later, a similar process is taking place in indicting not an individual Jew, but the entire Jewish nation on false charges of “war crimes,” deliberate killing and disproportionate force. Now as then, the combination of anti-Semitism (thinly disguised as anti-Zionism) and religion – in this case, one that uses the language of human rights to promote its power and anti-democracy dogma – play a major role.

The core document is a 452-page United Nations “fact-finding report” written under a mandate provided by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), which is dominated by members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (Libya, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Sudan, Egypt, etc.) Like the military court that tried and sentenced Dreyfus, UNHRC officials appointed judge Richard Goldstone and others to this “inquiry mission” knowing that they were convinced of Israel’s guilt from the beginning and would produce a guilty verdict.

Goldstone picked 36 incidents (out of hundreds), and collected and presented evidence that justified their conclusions, under the facade of a fair and professional judicial process. Most of Goldstone’s evidence repeats the claims and publications of more than 50 so-called civil society organizations that claim to promote human rights, but, as a careful look at their activities demonstrates, most of their work is ideologically determined.

Goldstone is a high priest in this religion, with close ties to Human Rights Watch – whose officials have a documented history of sharp anti-Israel bias and false allegations. Following HRW and the other groups, the Goldstone report repeatedly and falsely charges Israel with war crimes. By any logical definition of proportionality, after 8,000 rocket attacks, on which Goldstone and his colleagues remained silent, Israel had the moral right to flatten all of Gaza.

Goldstone’s indictment, like the Dreyfus case, began with the premise of guilt, and featured a facade of technical evidence that would seem, for those who do not examine the details (particularly journalists), to seal the indictment. In late-19th-century France, police and military “researchers” produced handwriting samples that did not match those of Dreyfus, while absurdly claiming that this mismatch “proved” how clever he was in hiding his identity. In the case framing Israel, the technical evidence consists of repeating the white phosphorus accusations made by HRW’s former “senior military analyst” (and Nazi memorabilia fetishist), as well as pieces of ammunition that Goldstone, with no military experience, claims to have identified in the walls of a mosque months after the fighting ended.

In Dreyfus-type situations, prosecutors quickly bury any exculpatory evidence that would raise questions. For Goldstone, this meant erasing and ignoring numerous publically available videos showing extensive use of human shields. By relying exclusively on “Palestinian testimony,” supervised closely by Hamas, the fact that more than one million Gazans were used as human shields remained a dirty (but not little) secret.

Now, as in France during the Dreyfus hysteria, justice will only be possible when there’s enough outrage to force a reversal of this false indictment against Israel for defending itself against terrorism. This will take time – the anti-Israel hysteria and double standards, like the anti-Semitism then, is too deeply rooted and institutionalized to be readily exposed.

And while some serious people, including non-Jews and non-Israeli such as Richard Kemp (who was the commander of British forces in Afghanistan) have clearly refuted Goldstone's accusations, these arguments need to be repeated widely and consistently. It may take years until a modern Emile Zola emerges to articulate and denounce this immoral farce and its perpetrators.

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