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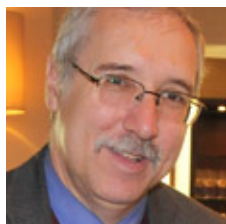
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Gerald M. Steinberg
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The human rights sham

Op-ed: Goldstone travesty exposed abuse of human rights discourse for immoral goals

Gerald M. Steinberg

Published: 05.05.11, 11:59 / Israel Opinion

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The travesty of the “Goldstone report” was the predictable result of the unholy alliance between the worst human rights violators – the regimes controlling Libya, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, etc. – and powerful officials of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who exploit the façade of moral language for immoral goals.

The leaders of this alliance abused the tragedy of the Gaza war and Judge Goldstone’s reputation in order to promote a lethal political assault against Israel. NGO Monitor, which I head, has been a

consistent and substantive (as distinct from personal) critic of the Goldstone report, and the subsequent de-legitimization efforts, from the beginning.

It took Goldstone a long time, but he has finally taken a major step towards restoring his moral standing. Goldstone’s April 3 article in the Washington Post belatedly acknowledges that there was no basis for the libel accusing Israeli soldiers of deliberately killing civilians in Gaza, and that his report put far too little emphasis on the thousands of Palestinian missile and terror attacks against Israelis – each of which constitutes a real war crime.

In contrast, many others involved in this immoral farce have attacked Goldstone for acknowledging the truth. These hard-core propagandists initially embraced the Jewish judge from South Africa who attacked Israel, but have now dismissed Goldstone’s words because he no longer supports their party line. Instead of crediting him with the wisdom to see the evidence and admit

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mistakes, his former supporters invoke racist stereotypes of a nefarious Jewish/Zionist lobby that forced Goldstone to make statements he knew to be untrue.

Judge Goldstone's three colleagues chosen for the 2009 UN "fact finding" mission – Hila Jilani, Christine Chinkin, and Desmond Travers – are leading this counterattack. From the outset, the blatant biases and lack of expertise on the part of those who claim to sit in moral judgment of Israel have plagued the false "investigation." These three activists had signed open letters accusing Israel of "war crimes" before the panel was formed. In a real legal process, all three would have been forced to withdraw from any such proceedings.

Now, they have turned against Goldstone, accusing him of collapsing under the strain, while they held firm. "Had we given in to pressures from any quarter to sanitize our conclusions, we would be doing a serious injustice to the hundreds of innocent civilians killed during the Gaza conflict...."

Credibility destroyed

But for anyone who has known and listened to Goldstone, and is familiar with the details, the accusations that he bowed to pressure have no traction. In reality, a careful reading of his statements over the past six months shows a gradual but growing recognition of the facts. Goldstone acknowledges that the mandate provided by the UN Human Rights Council was entirely biased, and that the evidence copied by the "fact finding" commission staff from their ideological NGO allies had been invented.

Goldstone's retraction therefore also destroys any remaining credibility for these NGOs. While much of the background material remains secret (in violation of due process requirements,) it appears that Amnesty International's anti-Israel campaign provided the 36 incidents that formed the structure of the UN report.

As a result, it is not surprising that these NGOs and NGO officials have joined the campaign to distort and rewrite Goldstone's words, in a desperate effort to preserve their credibility. Indeed, this report had its origins in the infamous NGO Forum of the 2001 UN Durban conference, in which the leaders of over 1,500 organizations employed the rhetoric of human rights to implement a strategy turning Israel into a pariah state.

Goldstone's statement exposed the ways that the UN-NGO alliance invents "facts" and distorts international law beyond recognition in order to single out Israel. Along with Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch (HRW), B'Tselem, and numerous Palestinian and other groups provided most of the unverifiable "evidence" used in the Goldstone Report.

In a desperate effort to limit the damage, Kenneth Roth, an anti-Israel ideologue who heads HRW, frantically published articles in the Jerusalem Post, Guardian, and New York Times, attempting to rewrite Goldstone's carefully chosen words. Under Roth, HRW employed an obsessive collector of Nazi memorabilia to write its Gaza reports, marketed Gaddafi's "Tripoli spring," and solicited donors from Saudi Arabia to combat pro-Israel "pressure

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groups.”

This unethical behavior by powerful NGOs, and their intensive efforts to distort and spin Goldstone’s recognition of moral mistakes, is not unique. In 2010, Robert Bernstein, the founder of HRW

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condemned his own organization, and suffered the same type of abuse as Goldstone is now receiving. Bernstein stood fast and refused to be “spun” or reinterpreted, and now Goldstone has joined him in speaking truth to the abuses of NGO power.

Far from bowing to pressure, it took courage for Goldstone to defy lifelong friends and allies who are at the center of this campaign. He should be given credit for this belated understanding, and encouraged to continue in this direction.

Gerald Steinberg is president of Jerusalem-based NGO Monitor and professor of political science at Bar-Ilan University

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Ben Alofs, Bangor, UK (05.05.11)
2. HRW
Jorge, Israel/USA/Argentina (05.05.11)
3. You proved your point, Ben!
Joe, London, UK (05.05.11)
4. **#1 please explain**
Israel Israeli, Tel Aviv (05.05.11)
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Thomas, US (05.05.11)
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ghostq (05.05.11)
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Ben Alofs, Bangor, UK (05.05.11)
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dino, lebanon (05.05.11)

10. @8 Ben's apology: Yup, we'll ignore you
Carl, USA (05.05.11)
11. #1 Your Fundamentalism is Invisible to You
Dallas, Canada (05.05.11)
12. Ben Alofs - silly!
CC (05.05.11)
13. Benny #8
Gee, Zikron Yaakov (05.05.11)
14. #1 Bad news, Ben
Stephen in New York (05.05.11)
15. a pill hard to swallow
Ricardo, USA (05.05.11)
16. #8 that is your problem. You are hateful and on top of
Frank, California USA (05.05.11)
17. #1 & #8 Your comments are as stupid as you can get
Phil, Ireland (05.05.11)
18. Let's hope Ben (Alofs) that your medical
Robert Haymond, Israel/Canada (05.05.11)
19. To all my detractors, please understand my condition
Ben Alofs, Bangor, UK (05.06.11)
20. Dr Alofs! Do take a day off when you have an off day.
Harry Wright, UK (05.06.11)
21. Dear old Gerald
Ussishkin, Tel Aviv Israel (05.06.11)
22. Ben Alofs Bangor, UK
Elizabeth (05.06.11)
23. Ussishkin #21: Stands to reason
Robert Haymond, Israel/Canada (05.06.11)
24. Ben Alofs again: It occurs to me that
Robert Haymond, Israel/Canada (05.06.11)
25. Serving in Cast Lead
ussishkin, Tel Aviv Israel (05.07.11)
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Noah Lev, HollywoodUSA (05.07.11)
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