

Haus der Demokratie und Menschenrechte  
Greifswalder Str. 4  
D- 10405 Berlin

15. April 2011

Dear Judge Goldstone,

When your Report to the United Nations was published in Germany, our President of the Jüdische Stimme at the time, Prof. Dr. Rolf Verleger, spoke at the Press Conference together with Jeff Halper, Stéphane Hessel and its publisher, Abraham Melzer, at which your Report was presented. The Report aroused considerable interest in Germany but received relatively little attention in the media, as German journalists were afraid of broaching the subject.

When the State of Israel and the South African Jewish Community accused you of being an anti-Zionist and even of being an anti-Semite and a self-hating Jew, we were filled with indignation and voiced our protest.

And we are outraged by the way the Israeli government and many Jewish institutions are instrumentalizing your article in *The Washington Post* for their own purposes. We have read it, and although we do not agree with some of your comments, we did not perceive any request on your part to the United Nations to withdraw the Report, as Mr. Yishai is asking them to do.

But we do indeed wonder what your motives could have been for writing the article. Were you subjected to deeply emotional, social or political pressure to do so? We are Jews and Israelis who are well acquainted with the inquisitorial methods often used by Israeli governments. We also know what Israeli soldiers are capable of, largely from their own testimonies. We therefore fear your article may have provided Israel with a *carte blanche* to continue its behaviour, which it does not deserve.

Your Report largely confirmed what we already knew about the atrocities committed by the Israeli Army. The testimonies on oath of Israeli soldiers given to the organization *Breaking the Silence* are revealing. They have testified about their emotional turmoil and their moral doubts over the killing of civilians, all unnecessary, and committed partly for fun, partly out of boredom and sometimes out of pure, personal hatred. It is high time for the Human Rights Council of the United Nations to investigate and confirm these testimonies.

We are grateful to you for the courage and integrity you have shown up till now, and which we fear you will need in future to withstand attempts by the State of Israel to discredit you. We assume even greater pressure may be exerted, more aggressive and more obnoxious. You have offered the Zionist government your little finger, but they want your whole hand – as the statements of President Shimon Peres all too clearly indicate.

The war against civilians has always been part of the Israeli Army's daily routine; much has indeed been taught and discussed about purity of weapons, but this principle, if indeed it was ever taken seriously at all, has been repeatedly ignored. In the private diaries of Moshe Sharett as early as 1952 one reads his opinion of “such daring Israeli commanders” as Ariel Sharon, who crossed the Jordanian frontier at night and killed civilians. “I hear every morning on the radio,” Sharett wrote, “what this bastard Sharon has been up to during the night.” In her book *Israel's Sacred Terrorism*, Livia Rokach commented on selected excerpts of Sharett's Diaries, which describe the Israeli strategies of state terrorism from the beginning, and this situation has unfortunately not changed.

Not only the killing of civilians but also numerous acts committed by Israeli soldiers should be taken into account, performed “only” with the intention of making the lives of Palestinians as unbearable as possible: To torment and maltreat them by turning whole families and the inhabitants of entire villages out of their homes at night and making them believe for hours on end that they were going to be driven out of the country. Several members of our organization have served in the Israeli Army and have experienced such incidents. These were neither accidents nor mistakes but were carried out systematically and on purpose. When asked why “we” are doing this, the answer given by a young officer in command was: “Because we have to make their – the Palestinians' - lives hell so that they will flee of their own accord.”

One can read about the war against the civilian Palestinian population as a guiding force of the Israeli Armed Forces in Itzhak Rabin's Memoirs, and his descriptions of how he and his comrades in the so-called War of Independence drove the Palestinians out of their homes. In *The Other Side of the Coin*, Uri Avnery describes how the State of Israel treated its Palestinian Arab citizens. The whole conflict has always been directed against an unarmed civilian population and not against technically well equipped armed forces.

Hundreds of Palestinian Arab towns and villages have been wiped out and their inhabitants either killed or driven out of the country. The myth cannot be revived of decent Israeli soldiers who phone their victims in order to warn them before they kill them. The Israeli Army is *not* a

“humane” army, as Ehud Barak maintained after the Gaza massacre, it is as brutal and cynical as every other army and therefore shouldn't receive a Kosher label for killing Palestinian civilians “only by mistake”. Those responsible for the heavy bombardment of the Gaza Strip, the most densely populated strip of land in the world, must from the outset have reckoned with a large number of civilian dead and wounded.

Newspapers are now carrying absurd statements about you and the UN Report. A member of the Knesset wants to issue proceedings against you before a New York Federal District Court. The State of Israel wants to take legal action against the UN-Report on the grounds that it is damaging to the reputation of the State. Yet it is not the report in your name which damages the State of Israel but its own cynically aggressive violence in the guise of “self-defense”, combined with a persistent disregard for human rights and the violation of the United Nations Charter. So we want you to know that there are Jews, both in Israel and throughout the world, who reject this inquisitorial defamation, who support you and will continue to support you.

We are afraid more damage might be caused by further interpretation of your statement to mean your intended dissociation from the Report and urgently request you to state clearly and unequivocally that you have never considered either relativizing the Goldstone Report or dissociating yourself from it.

Executive Committee

Jüdische Stimme für gerechten Frieden in Nahost (Jewish Voice for a Just Peace in the Middle East), Germany