

Touro's IHRH Hosts High-Profile Conference

Former Arkansas Governor and U.S. Republican presidential candidate Mike Huckabee, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel, former New York City Mayor Ed Koch, Academy Award-winning actor Jon Voight and over a dozen other high-profile speakers criticized the U.N.'s anti-Israel Durban III event at a full-day conference co-hosted by Touro College's Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust and the Hudson Institute this past September.

Speaker after speaker at the conference entitled, "The Perils of Global Intolerance: The United Nations and Durban III," called on the United Nations to return to its "original mandate" of protecting human rights and promoting world peace for all. They alleged that some of the world's most brutal tyrants, guilty of the most egregious human rights abuses, have hijacked the U.N. human rights agenda and turned it into an anti-Israel crusade, while the U.N. has largely ignored the plight of millions of people around the world suffering from some of the worst violations of human rights.

Anne Bayefsky, an international human rights lawyer, organized and chaired the conference as director of Touro College's Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust (IHRH). The author and editor of 11 books and a



Jon Voight speaks to reporters at IHRH conference with, from left to right, Anne Bayefsky, John Bolton and Elie Wiesel

recipient of Canada's premier human rights fellowship, Professor Bayefsky noted that the U.N.'s top human rights body, the Human Rights Council, has adopted almost as many condemnations of Israel as it has for all other 192 U.N. member states combined, and that in 2010, Israel was the most criticized country in the world by U.N. bodies for human rights violations; the United States was fifth, and Iran was 11th.

"We are here to shine the light of day upon the perversion of human rights and freedoms by those we charged to define and promote them," she told some 200 conference attendees. "We are here because we refuse to stand by while the defenders of the Jewish people are demonized because make no mistake about the purpose of such a slander: It is the rejection of a Jewish state, the antithesis of the protection of human rights."

Welcoming the attendees to the conference held at the Millennium U.N. Plaza Hotel, Touro College President and CEO Dr. Alan Kadish described Durban III as "another example of the painful loss of honesty and mutual respect that must inform the relationships among ethnic groups...The citizens of Israel are



Anne Bayefsky delivers opening remarks at IHRH conference



Dr. Alan Kadish welcomes conference participants

entitled to access to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, which ought to be basic rights for all human beings. To pillory them for attempting to achieve these goals is not only an attempt to distort the truth, but it is in and of itself racist."

Other high-profile speakers at the IHRH conference included former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. John Bolton, World Jewish Congress President Ron Lauder, Harvard Law Professor and best-selling author Alan Dershowitz, Israeli Minister of Information and Diaspora Yuli Edelstein, Canadian Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney, former Israeli Ambassador to the U.N. Dore Gold, Harvard Professor and National

Humanities Medal recipient Ruth Wisse, Sudanese human rights activist and child slave survivor Simon Deng, Hoover Institute Fellow and National Humanities Medal recipient Shelby Steele and best-selling British author and award-winning journalist Douglas Murray.

In opening the conference, Israeli Ambassador to the U.N. Ron Prosor said that the so-called Durban Declaration has been "contaminated by the taint of racism that it claims to fight. Time and again, this Durban Declaration and its conferences have been used as vehicles to advance prejudice. They have thrust open a door for anti-Western, anti-Israel and anti-Semitic extremists to spread their views under the cloak of so-called U.N. legitimacy. We cannot and we will not ignore such a willful misuse and abuse of the United Nations," he said, praising the leading democratic nations that had joined Israel in boycotting the latest incarnation of Durban including the United States, Canada, France and the United Kingdom.

The Durban III event, held on Sept. 22 during the annual opening of the U.N. General Assembly, commemorated the 10th anniversary of the U.N.'s Durban Declaration, which accused only Israel, among 192 U.N. members, of racism. The Durban Declaration emerged from the U.N.'s "anti-racism" conference in Durban, South Africa, in September 2001.

The U.N. held an "anti-racism" review conference, also known as Durban II, in Geneva in April 2009. The vehemently anti-Semitic opening governmental speech was delivered by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who also spoke at the U.N. General Assembly this past Sept. 22, the same day as the Durban III event. Diplomats from more than 30 countries walked out of the General Assembly as Mr. Ahmadinejad repeated his Holocaust denials in a speech laden with anti-U.S. and anti-Israel rhetoric. Iran's foreign minister spoke at Durban III itself.

Ron Prosor, Ron Lauder and Elie Wiesel, from left to right





IHRH CONFERENCE FEATURES PROMINENT MUSLIM SPEAKERS WHO DEFEND ISRAEL

Shelby Steele, Ph.D., with from
left to right, Dr. Zuhdi Jasser,
Douglas Murray, Ruth Wisse,
Ph.D., and Dr. Wafa Sultan

The IHRH conference also featured several high-profile Muslim speakers who defended Israel and accused the United Nations of ignoring human rights abuses of women, gays, Christians and other minorities living in Arab countries while focusing on alleged violations of human rights by Israel. Among them were Syrian-born psychiatrist and political commentator Wafa Sultan who was named one of Time Magazine's 100 most influential people in the world in 2006, award-winning Israeli Arab journalist Khaled Abu Toameh and American Islamic Forum for Democracy President and Founder Dr. Zuhdi Jasser.

Dr. Sultan, who immigrated to the United States from Syria, spoke about being indoctrinated as a young child to "despise and denigrate Jews. Killing Jews was always presented to me and my classmates as a religious obligation...When it is planted in the mind of a child, tragically this hatred generates dangerous actions and even death...Durban III harbors deep anti-Semitic sentiment, the same sentiment with which my mind was poisoned, sentiments that are still taught to hundreds of millions of Arab kids throughout the Middle East."

Claiming that Israel stands alone in the Middle East as a nation that grants all its citizens—men and women alike—equal rights, freedom of religion, speech and the press, Dr. Sultan also accused the U.N. of neglecting its fundamental mission under pressure from "totalitarian Muslim regimes that put their full faith and the credit of their oil wealth behind this anti-Israel campaign. While the United Nations obsessively attacks Israel, it has merely revealed its own abysmal human rights record."

Dr. Jasser, who served as a medical officer in the U.S. Navy for 11 years and regularly briefs members of the House and Senate congressional anti-terror caucuses, said Durban "will go down in history as one of the most blatant anti-Semitic, anti-Israel demonstrations that have happened under the auspices of the U.N." Referring to the brutal killings of pro-democracy protesters by the Syrian government, Dr. Jasser, an American of Syrian descent, said that the U.N. has been "missing in action when its leadership and sponsorship of democratic values has been needed the most."

U.N. CRITICIZED FOR GIVING IRAN'S AHMADINEJAD PLATFORM TO PROMOTE HATRED AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. Abu Toameh, who writes for *The Jerusalem Post* and serves as a producer and consultant for NBC News, said the General Assembly speech by Mr. Ahmadinejad promoted the same hatred and anti-Semitism that Palestinians hear every day in Gaza and the West Bank. "But what worries me is that the U.N. provides a platform for people like this. Today, this is a victory for Hamas, for Islamic Jihad, for Hezbollah, for Syria and for all the jihadists. Their message has actually been spread with the help of the United Nations."



Anne Bayefsky with former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee

Governor Huckabee said Mr. Ahmadinejad should have been "laughed out of the U.N. General Assembly rather than tolerated... What an absolute absurdity to allow that man to walk into a building not far from where we sit today and to give him a forum and allow him to spew the venomous hatred, the venomous bile that he was able to, and get worldwide attention for it. As a nation, our policies over these past couple of years has been to put more pressure on Israel for building communities and essentially building bedrooms in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) than we have put pressure on the Iranians to stop building a nuclear bomb that is pointed at Israel and ourselves. This is absurd."



Canadian Minister Jason Kenney

ISRAEL'S ENEMIES ACCUSED OF DISTORTING U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA AND PROMOTING ANTI-SEMITISM

Canadian Minister Kenney, who has been re-elected to Canada's House of Commons five times, said he was proud that Canada was the first country to pull out of both Durban II and Durban III, far in advance of other countries. "We will not be part of this event which commemorates an agenda that promotes racism rather than combats it" he said. "The government of Canada will not lend Canada's good name to the organized exercise in scapegoating that is the Durban process. As long as the international community persists in rewarding serial human rights abusers with seats on its Human Rights Council and giving them microphones at conferences like Durban III, it cannot expect Canada's endorsement of the process."

Professor Dershowitz, the author of 27 books and the recipient of numerous humanitarian awards and honorary doctorates, accused the United Nations of becoming "the main advocacy arm for one group of people, the Palestinians, while neglecting the rights of so many other people, whether they be the Kurds or the Armenians or the Tatars or the Chechens or so many others who have been brutally repressed." He accused the United Nations of encouraging anti-Semitism, racism and bigotry by "giving its imprimatur to that disgraceful word called Durban, which will go



Alan Dershowitz

down in history next to another city called Nuremberg...Does no one recognize the need for a single, neutral standard of human rights? For shame, for shame."



Former NYC Mayor Ed Koch

Former Mayor Koch, who is also a best-selling author and civil rights advocate, noted that the IHRH conference challenge to Durban III and its message of intolerance in the name of combating racism was a success. "I think we beat them. I think there is more attention being paid to what we're saying than what they're saying (at Durban III)."

Mr. Murray called the U.N. anti-racism Durban process a "bad but very serious joke. No organization can be serious if it has Iran on its Commission on the Status of Women, has Saudi Arabia, China and Cuba on its Human Rights Council, has China on its Committee on Information, has Sudan on the Executive Board of the Children's Fund, and has Iran on the U.N. Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice," he said. "What is happening in this city at this moment matters because it is stripping people in countries around the world of their ability to use the terminology of human rights and the terminology of racism."

Dr. Wisse, an author and professor of Yiddish and Comparative Literature at Harvard, noted that there were lessons to be learned about the United Nations from the three Durban "anti-racism" conferences it has hosted. "In the same way that Arab and European leaders long before Durban had attacked the Jews to deflect attention from their own abuses...the 2001 Durban conference allowed racist governments and societies to defame Israel, and secondarily America, to perpetuate the racism and intolerance of their own societies. Durban III is surely the time to ask whether the remedy, the United Nations, has not become worse than the condition that it came to cure."

Dr. Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, author, human rights activist, and professor at Boston University, called Durban III a "disgrace" and noted that the United Nations principles of equality and dignity for every human being have been perverted. "One thing is clear...anti-Semitism is still a subject that we must deal with."

Mr. Voight, who won an Academy Award for his role as a paraplegic Vietnam War veteran in the film "Coming Home" and has also won three Golden Globe Awards, labeled Durban part of a political campaign to "wipe Israel off the map. Terrorists and killers are trying to find new ways to bring hatred toward the Jewish people once again...I'm here today to express my outrage."

SUDANESE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND FORMER CHILD SLAVE SAYS SUDANESE PEOPLE SUFFER FROM U.N.'S ANTI-ISRAEL STANCE

Recounting his chilling life story as a child slave in Northern Sudan and as a Sudanese refugee who survived the slaughter of some four million Sudanese between 1995 to 2005, Sudanese human rights activist Simon Deng provided some of the conference's most compelling testimony about the shortfalls in the U.N.'s human rights performance.

Mr. Deng, who recalled that he was nine years old when an Arab man tricked him into boarding a boat to the Northern Sudan and then forced him to serve as his family's slave for 3-1/2 years, alleged that there are people suffering from the U.N.'s anti-Israeli positions even more than the Israelis. "I belong to one of those peoples," he said, explaining that for 50 years, the indigenous black population

of Sudan—Christians and Muslims alike—has been victim to what he called "brutal racist Arab Muslim regimes" in Khartoum.

"In southern Sudan, my homeland, about four million innocent men, women and children were slaughtered from 1995 to 2005. Seven million were ethnically cleansed and became the largest refugee group since World War II. The U.N. is concerned about...Palestinian refugees. They dedicated a separate agency for them and they treat them with special privileges. Meanwhile, my people who are ethnically cleansed, murdered and enslaved are readily ignored...What Israel does is being portrayed as a Western sin but the truth is that the real sins happen when the West abandons us—we the Africans in



Simon Deng with Jon Voight



IHRH conference attendees listen to speaker at Millennium U.N. Plaza Hotel

Sudan, the victims of Arab Islamic apartheid.”

Mr. Deng, who launched the Sudan Freedom Walk in 2006, trekking 300 miles from U.N. headquarters in New York to Washington D.C. as a call to action to end slavery and genocide in Sudan, said that based on the shelter and protection that Israel has provided to Sudanese refugees, it is “absolutely absurd” to call Israel a racist state. “I have been to Israel five times visiting Sudanese refugees...The black Muslims from Darfur choose Israel above all the Arab Muslim states of the area. In Israel, the black Sudanese Christians and Muslims were welcomed and

treated like human beings. Israel is racist? To me and to my people, the people who know racism, the answer is absolutely not.”

The IHRH conference was webcast live and is now archived on the institute’s website at www.touro.edu/ihrh/. The webcast has been watched by 200,000 viewers.

The Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust is a Touro-wide center that emphasizes Touro College’s many contributions to the field of human rights education and embodies Touro’s deep commitment to developing and conveying the lessons of the Holocaust.