



U.N. Sabotage and Subterfuge on the Rape of Israeli Women

The disgraceful role played by the U.N. in renouncing and shunning Israeli victims of sexual violence has affected the women's movement.



By Amy Neustein, Ph.D./ JNS.org

Author and international relations expert Dr. Yvette Alt Miller, in a recent column in Aish, noted that around the time Sheryl Sandberg's documentary "Screams Before Silence" — about the Oct. 7 rapes and murders of women and girls — was released, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres "all but publicly declared Hamas had not used sexual violence."

Alt Miller pointed out that in Guterres's annual report titled "Conflict-Related Sexual Violence," he failed to list Hamas among the organizations that had employed sexual violence over the past year.

Such an omission is highly disturbing. Especially because U.N. investigators traveled to Israel and performed extensive reviews of post-mortem pathology reports, audio and video recordings, witness statements and other forensic materials. They told the U.N. Security Council in March: "There are reasonable grounds to believe that conflict-related sexual violence — including rape and gang rape — occurred across multiple locations of Israel and the Gaza periphery during the attacks on 7 October 2023."

Even worse, a week after the release of Sandberg's documentary, the United Nations sent a troubling press release to Agence France-Presse. The flashy title was "U.N. Experts Condemn Israel's Sexual Assault and Violence in Gaza." The title was clearly designed to grab readers' attention. But the release failed to provide any compelling proof of sexual violence perpetrated by IDF soldiers.

This absurdly fatuous and unsubstantiated U.N. libel, which condemned the IDF for

horrific acts it didn't commit, was clearly intended to divert attention from the blood-curdling incidents of rape and sexual torture copiously documented by Sandberg in "Screams Before Silence."

What does this say about the world's attitude toward sexual violence when it happens to Jewish females? Apparently, the world decides it does not exist. Sandberg got it right when she told Chris Cuomo on News Nation: "This is what we're up against ... This is a challenge to our way of life, this is a challenge to democracy, this is a challenge to equality for women, anywhere in the world."

Sandberg's exhortations were presaged by Bev Goldman, a writer for Jewish Life magazine, the most widely read Jewish publication in South Africa. In her article, aptly titled "Israel in Context: Silence!" Goldman vehemently called out the U.N. for its double standards. "The U.N.'s disregard and tone-deaf response to Hamas' attack is woefully unsatisfactory."

In describing the violation of Israeli women and girls, the writer asserted: "The obscene and repulsive treatment they meted out to the Israeli women, both those barely alive and those already dead, cannot be comprehended by anyone for whom morality is a life value. It cannot. It is too incomprehensible, too unfathomable, too repellent."

Goldman chronicled the emergence of international laws prohibiting sexual violence against women and girls: "In 1993, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights (replaced in 2006 by the U.N. Human Rights Council) declared systematic rape ... to be crimes against humanity punishable as violations of women's human rights. In 1995, the U.N.'s Fourth World Conference on Women specified that rape by armed groups during wartime is a war crime."



U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres briefs reporters on the situation in Gaza on Jan. 15. (CREDIT: LOEY FELIPE/U.N. PHOTO)

She then pointed to a landmark 1998 case in which a "Rwandan tribunal had ruled that specifically, 'rape and sexual violence constitute genocide.'" She noted, "In 2008, the U.N. Security Council adopted resolution 1820, which stated that 'rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide.'"

As a sociologist, I am deeply troubled by the distortion, dismissal and denial of irrefutable evidence of sexual violence and torture of Israeli women and girls. As I wrote in

Women's eNews last fall, "The abject failure for organized women's groups to repudiate the brutal rape of Israeli teenagers and women signifies a serious failure in the women's movement today."

Since I wrote that editorial, I have seen over time how the disgraceful role played by the U.N. in renouncing and shunning Israeli victims of sexual violence has affected the women's movement. Sadly, Israeli rape victims and their Jewish counterparts in the diaspora stand alone. The signs of "micro-aggression" toward Israeli rape victims are clear. Yet there is no outcry from the women's movement to redress this striking inequity.

I am going to add my "screams" by turning up the volume and shouting from the rooftops until the women's movement and the U.N. acknowledge the horror of the unprecedented sexual violence painstakingly captured in Sandberg's "Screams Before Silence." To do anything less would be a betrayal of my sisters in Israel and of womankind.

This is an edited version of a piece originally published by Women's eNews on May 16. Amy Neustein, Ph.D., is working on a second edition of her book "From Madness to Mutiny," to be published by Oxford University Press.

Profile of Maxim Herkin



Maxim Herkin, 35, (Maxim ben Tela) was kidnapped from the Nova music festival on Oct. 7. A resident of Tirat Hacarmel near Haifa, he has a 3-year-old daughter Monica and supports his mother Tela and 11-year-old brother, Peter.



Maxim is studying computer science at the Open University of Israel. "They stole my life and stole my son," said Tela. "Maxim is our back, our anchor. He is my whole world."

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