

Israeli rights group criticises 'oppression' of Palestinians

19/10/2018 08:31 by admin

The Israeli government is "quite expert at constructing this facade of legality which has been very successful at allowing us not to have to deal with any international consequences," El-Ad said.

Netanyahu told a recent meeting with Christian media outlets that he defined Bâ€™Tselem as "a disgrace." (Source: Reuters)

United Nations: The head of Israel's leading human rights group strongly criticised Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government during a contentious UN Security Council meeting on Thursday for what he called its "supremacy and oppression" of the Palestinians.

Israel's UN Ambassador Danny Danon responded, accusing Hagai El-Ad, director of Bâ€™Tselem, of staging "a circus" in the council and then in Hebrew telling him: "Shame on you! You are a collaborator!"

That drew a rebuke from Britain's UN Ambassador Karen Pierce who complained that council members could not understand Danon's remarks in Hebrew, which is not one of the UN's official languages. AP obtained a translation after the council meeting.

Bâ€™Tselem opposes Israeli settlements in the West Bank and has documented abuses committed by Israeli soldiers, sparking accusations of treason by Israeli hardliners. The rights group has also angered Israeli leaders because it accepts funding from foreign donors including the European Commission and because it airs its criticism in international venues like the United Nations.

Netanyahu told a recent meeting with Christian media outlets that he defined Bâ€™Tselem as "a disgrace."

El-Ad was invited to address the UN's most powerful body by Bolivia, which holds the Security Council presidency this month, and he used his speech to decry "the indignity, the outrage, the pain of the people denied human rights for more than 50 years."

He described how Israel is fragmenting Palestinian land, separating Gaza from the West Bank, walling off east Jerusalem which the Palestinians want as their future capital, and how Israeli courts legalize demolitions of Palestinian homes and the relocation of people.

The Israeli government is "quite expert at constructing this facade of legality which has been very successful at allowing us not to have to deal with any international consequences," El-Ad said. And this has enabled Israel to continue "oppressing millions while it somehow is still being considered a democracy."

He said ongoing efforts to legislate against Israeli human rights organizations "now go hand-in-hand with the routine in which opposition to the occupation is being equated with treason."

"So to president Netanyahu I say this: You will never silence us, nor the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who reject a present founded on supremacy and oppression and stand for a future built on equality, freedom and human rights," El-Ad said.

El-Ad urged the world to "let Israel know that it will no longer stand idly by, that it will take action against the

continued dismantling of the Palestinian people.â€•

Israelâ€™s Danon said Bâ€™Tselem was invited by Bolivia, â€œa country with a terrible human rights record to defame our strong democracy _ but it actually had the opposite effectâ€• and proved â€œthe strength of Israelâ€™s vibrant democracy.â€•

â€œI challenge you all, all of you, to find a Palestinian or a Bolivian who could dare defame his government at the Security Council,â€• Danon said. â€œAt best he might be thrown in jail but he would more likely end up dead.â€•

Danon then accused Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of inspiring a â€œrampant culture of hateâ€• during his 13 years in office and â€œenabling an imminent warâ€• between Hamas, which controls Gaza, and Israel.

â€œFar from a peace partner, Mahmoud Abbas is the obstacle for peace,â€• he said.

Boliviaâ€™s deputy UN Ambassador Veronica Cordova Soria, who presided over the meeting, had a message for El-Ad when she spoke.

â€œOn behalf of this council I want to apologize for the way he was mistreated today,â€• she told members. â€œWeâ€™re not here to discuss Boliviaâ€™s human rights.â€•

- AP