



Mission permanent d'Israël  
auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies  
et des Organisations Internationales à Genève

משלחת ישראל  
ליד משרד האומות המאוחדות  
והארגונים הבינלאומיים בג'נבה

**29<sup>th</sup> session of the Working Group of the UPR**  
**Opening Statement**

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**Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Israel**

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**United Nations, Geneva**

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Delegation of Israel is proud to be here today for Israel's third Universal Periodic Review. We believe that if implemented properly, the UPR can be a useful instrument in promoting human rights worldwide. We welcome this opportunity to engage in a fruitful dialogue, share some of our achievements and discuss our challenges in an objective manner. We truly hope that today's discussion will be a constructive one, and will focus on the actions Israel has taken to improve human rights in our country since our last review in 2013.

This year, we will mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This very year, we will also celebrate 70 years since the establishment of the modern State of Israel. Throughout its existence, Israel, as a democratic country governed by the rule of law, has always stood up for human rights and democratic values. It has done so while facing serious threats to its security, and while needing to integrate diverse communities and religious groups. And let me say- it has done so remarkably well.

We uphold human rights because they are part and parcel of our own core values, not in order to please others. At the same time, we do not shy away from objective criticism and are always willing to listen to recommendations and advice.

It is in keeping with this commitment to human rights, enshrined in our Declaration of Independence, that Israel has always defended the rights of the members of our society that are in vulnerable situations, while seeking redress for apparent wrongs through our active judiciary. And it is precisely in this spirit that since 2012, the Government of Israel has promoted a project for a joint forum designed to facilitate open dialogue and improve cooperation between State authorities and civil society organizations.

The continuous discrimination against Israel in the Human Rights Council, embodied in the infamous Item 7, and the unparalleled number of one-sided biased and political resolutions adopted regularly by the automatic majority of its members testify not only to the unfair treatment of the State of Israel, but also to the deficiencies of the Council itself and its agenda.

Clearly some countries will choose to take advantage of today's discussion to wage political attacks against Israel. But we will not let this distract us from the main objective, which is our steadfast commitment to continue to protect human rights and strengthen our democracy.

And if this cloud has a silver lining, it is the fact that today more and more countries are joining Israel in realizing that this theatre of the absurd cannot go on forever, and that reform is necessary. This hope for change, alongside our own commitment to human rights, is why we continue our engagement with the UPR, as well as other UN human rights mechanisms which are not biased against us. This includes engagement with Special Procedures and participation in the Council's work as active observers.

We consider favorably most requests that we get, and make a sincere effort to host one official country visit a year. We welcomed the visit of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women a year ago, and are currently considering other requests for the coming year. In addition, we welcome the frequent unofficial visits that special mandate-holders make in Israel on their academic capacity, and arrange for meetings with government officials. In the past year alone we cooperated with at least four such visits. Moreover, we regularly engage with the various mandate-holders and also organize or co-sponsor events on a variety of Human Rights thematic issues.

Israel's ratification of seven core UN Human Rights Conventions, and of many other HR Instruments, reflects our country's strong commitment to the important protections established in those conventions, and to its additional monitoring mechanisms.

Fundamental human rights protections are afforded to every individual, men, women and children, preserved by a series of Basic Laws and relate to all aspects of life. Israel's courts are both empowered and willing to intervene and impact public policy.

With the 2030 Agenda, Israel, as part of the International Community, is committed to achieve equality and leave no one behind and has taken various steps towards the realization of the sustainable development goals, with regards to many groups, among them women, minorities and the LGBTI community.

Our relations with the Palestinians will continue to be of the highest priority, and despite the known setbacks in the Peace Process, we will continue to seek a lasting solution that will enable our two peoples to live side by side in peace and security.

Israel faces many challenges including terrorism, regional instability and unceasing incitement against our very right to exist as a sovereign State. In this context, we go to great lengths to defend our citizens, which is also part of our fundamental human rights obligations.

We are concerned about the situation in the Gaza Strip as much as others-probably even more. We highly support the reconstruction of its civilian infrastructures, but will not stand idly by when funds and funding for the needs of the Gaza citizens are diverted by Hamas and other terror organizations to smuggle weapons, build attack tunnels that aim to reach our residential areas, and develop other infrastructure and capabilities against our population. Nor will we stand idly by as Israeli citizens are being held by the Hamas and the remains of our soldiers have not been returned in gross violation of International Humanitarian Law.

Israel will continue extending its hand to assist those in need whether they are near or far. Our emergency aid missions and field hospitals have been deployed in many remote sites where natural disasters unfortunately struck, from Turkey to Haiti, Sierra Leone, Philippines and Mexico. And likewise, we have not spared our efforts to help the victims of armed conflict close by.

Indeed, far away from the spotlight, since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, Israel has reached out and provided medical treatment to some 4,000 wounded Syrians, among them 900 children. Throughout operation "Good Neighbor", the IDF has been providing humanitarian aid to Syrian residents in areas adjacent to Israel, including fuel, food and other essential goods. 110 such aid missions have taken place since August 2016. Most recently, Israel helped to set up a maternity hospital, offering desperately needed medical services to Syrian women.

Israel, like many other developed countries around the world, has been required to cope with various challenges posed by the global migration crisis. This issue requires balancing the interests of human rights and individual liberties on the one hand, and the State's right to protect its borders and control its immigration policy, on the other.

Mr. President,

We are here today with a firm belief that this dialogue can provide Israel with an important instrument to further improve its mechanisms for a better implementation of human rights. I call upon everyone to adopt a constructive approach today, so we do not miss this important opportunity for exchange.

I will now pass the floor to my distinguished colleague Ms. Emi Palmor, Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Justice.

Thank you.