

Elie Wiesel: Ahmadinejad Should Be Indicted

Famous Jewish author and Nobel Peace Prize–winner Elie Wiesel, who also happens to be a Holocaust survivor, believes that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad should be indicted with incitement to commit a crime against humanity.

According to Wiesel, “Ahmadinejad has two goals: One goal is to become nuclear, and the second goal is to destroy the State of Israel. The fact is, he means it. If he goes to Germany or here to New York, he should be arrested and brought to The Hague and indicted and charged with intent to commit a crime against humanity. That would solve the problem. He should be arrested. He deserves it.”

Indeed, Ahmadinejad has engaged in incitement to commit genocide against the Israeli people. The crime of incitement to commit genocide is considered a crime against humanity in itself according to international law. According to the Rwanda Tribunal, the crime of incitement to commit genocide directly provokes “the perpetrator(s) to commit genocide, whether through speeches, shouting or threats uttered in public places or at public gatherings, or through the sale or dissemination, offer for sale or display of written material or printed matter in public places or at public gatherings, or through the public display of placards or posters, or through any other means of audiovisual communication.”

The person doing the inciting must have the intention to commit genocide, which is defined as “the wholesale destruction in whole or in part of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.” This means that even though Ahmadinejad has not displayed genocidal intentions against Iranian Jews, that does not mean he lacks genocidal intentions, for seeking the destruction of the Israeli Jewish community in Israel is

sufficient to label his goals as genocidal.

International law forbids incitement to commit genocide in Article 3 of the Genocide Convention, Article 25 (3) (e) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Article 3 (e) of the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and article 3 (c) of the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

Indeed, Ahmadinejad's public statements against the State of Israel demonstrate that he has genocidal ambitions. Ahmadinejad incites against Zionists in a very dehumanizing manner, comparing Zionism to cancer, mosquitoes and colonial oppressors, and he also claims that the Zionists lack religious piety. He has also referred to Jews as "filthy bacteria."

Such assertions dehumanizing Zionists and Jews work to prepare the population for genocide by teaching them that the target group is subhuman. Various genocides throughout history have started out with propaganda that dehumanizes the target population. For example, in the Rwandan genocide, Tutsis were compared to cockroaches, while during the Holocaust, Jews were compared to snakes, vermin and satanic figures.

Furthermore, Ahmadinejad has called to "remove the Zionist black stain from the human society," adding that "the very existence of Israel is an insult to humankind and an affront to all world nations," requiring the wiping out of this "scarlet letter from the ... forehead of humanity." He has also claimed that Israelis are not human beings: "They are like cattle, nay, more misguided. Next to them, all the criminals of the world seem righteous. Thanks to G-d, your wish will soon be realized, and this germ of corruption will be wiped off the face of the world."

Yet what is even more dangerous is that Ahmadinejad sites the

Shiite Islamic faith as a reason for these genocidal ambitions. He believes that the Mahdi, otherwise known as the Shiite Messiah, guides his government and their policies. Thus, some analysts believe Iran seeks to develop nuclear weapons in order to destroy Israel as the first necessary showdown needed for the arrival of the Mahdi.

Unfortunately, Israelis are not the only group Ahmadinejad has targeted in such a manner, for Iran's Baha'i community also is portrayed similarly. The Iranian state media frequently refers to Baha'is as prostitutes, filthy and incestuous. The Iranian government views them to be heretics because they don't believe Muhammad was the last prophet, and Iran frequently claims the Iranian Baha'is are agents of foreign powers, such as the United States and Israel.

While the Iranian government hasn't yet taken any actions directed toward the physical annihilation of Baha'is, there is evidence asserting that the Iranian government seeks to exterminate the Baha'i faith as a religious community in Iran. Official Iranian governmental documents assert that the progress and development of Baha'is should be blocked, that a plan must be devised to "confront and destroy" their cultural roots outside the country, that Baha'is should be expelled from universities, and that Baha'is should be denied employment and not have any position of influence within Iran. Since the Iranian Revolution, many Baha'is have already been killed, imprisoned, tortured and had their holy places and cemeteries desecrated.

According to Christopher Tuckwood, executive director of the Sentinel Project, while these actions don't necessarily amount to physical annihilation at the moment, "It does provide clear evidence of an overreaching state-directed plan with the intent of destroying the Baha'i faith and community, apparently through forced conversion to Islam."

Tuckwood also believes it is possible that in the future, Iran

could attempt to physically annihilate the Baha'is. Thus, this Iranian governmental document demonstrates that, like Israel, the Baha'i community in Iran is also a victim of incitement to genocide. As Romeo Dallaire, the former U.N. peacekeeping commander who tried to stop the Rwandan genocide, declared, "The similarities with what I saw in Rwanda are absolutely unquestionable, equal ... and in fact applied with seemingly the same verve. We are witnessing a slow-motion rehearsal for genocide."

Given all this, Elie Wiesel is correct in asserting that Ahmadinejad should be indicted for inciting crimes against humanity, against both the State of Israel and the Baha'i community in Iran.

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