

Israel and Rwanda: Paul Kagame and Benjamin Netanyahu, Partners in Persecution

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Featured image: Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu and Rwandan President Paul Kagame (Source: [Geeska Afrika Online](#))

On July 9, Rwandan “President” Paul Kagame arrived in Israel for another of his many visits to reinforce the longstanding pact between his military dictatorship and Israel’s brutal settler colonial regime. This time Kagame enjoyed an unusual honor not even afforded to President Trump when he visited Israel in May; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Reuven Rivlin both showed up to greet him upon arrival. The Jerusalem Post suggested that the special welcome had to do with Rwanda’s seat on the UN Human Rights Council—seriously. President Rivlin appeared to confirm this in his remarks:

“Rwanda is now going to be a member of the UN Human Rights Council. This is a body which is always against Israel, unfortunately. So we welcome all those, all those who are prepared to speak for us. And we appreciate your support very much.”

Kagame’s totalitarian regime is infamous for human rights abuse inside Rwanda, including the murder and imprisonment of journalists and political opponents, and the imprisonment of Victoire Ingabire Umuhoya, who dared to challenge him for the presidency in 2010. It’s also infamous for crimes in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), as confirmed in the UN’s own UN Mapping Report on Human Rights Abuse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2003 to 2010, which says that the Rwandan army’s massacre of hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees would be charged as genocide if brought to court. Kagame’s powerful friends have of course made sure that’s never happened; as Bill Clinton says, “It hasn’t been adjudicated.”

The UN Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in their 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2008 reports, documented Rwanda’s invasion and plunder of Congo. The 2012 UN Panel of Experts report identified Rwandan Defense Minister James Kabarebe as the top commander of the M23 militia then ravaging the native populations of eastern Congo.

So, after all these damning UN reports, how could Rwanda have been elected to the UN Human Rights Council? How could it now be pledging to use its seat in defense of Israel?

That wasn't difficult at all, and no more fraught with contradiction than other elections to UN officialdom. In 2014, the UN General Assembly's Special Political and Decolonization Committee elected Israel's representative Mordehai Amihai to serve as its vice chair. The Jerusalem Post actually managed to expand on that Orwellian illogic by calling it "an island of relative normality in the raging sea of injustice and outright absurdity that characterizes the UN's workings."

Also in 2014, the General Assembly elected Ugandan Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa to serve as its president for the next year, even though the UN Charter criminalizes wars of aggression against sovereign member nations, and Uganda has invaded three of them—Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan—over the past 27 years, leaving millions dead. No matter how many human rights abuses, wars of aggression, and mass atrocities member nations may have to their names, they move into UN positions of moral authority when it's deemed to be their turn.

The UN Human Rights Council, where Rwanda has pledged to defend its friend Israel, is a human rights abusers council as much as not. Its 47 members include Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, the Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain, and the United States of America, to name a few. The General Assembly elects its members to three-year terms through direct and secret ballot. Votes are putatively based on "the candidate States' contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as their voluntary pledges and commitments in this regard." They are in fact the result of politicking, vote trading, and slates in the five geographical groups represented: Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia Pacific, Western Europe and Other [Western] States, and Eastern Europe. The African nations simply rotate off and on, so that none are ever singled out as unfit to serve.

The Council has nevertheless managed to make Israel cry persecution and call on Rwanda to come to the rescue. In March of this year alone, it passed five resolutions censuring Israel—with the United States and Togo joining to vote against all five. According to AIPAC,

"the UN Human Rights Council has passed 67 resolutions condemning the Jewish state since its inception in 2006, more than it has levied against all other countries combined."

Who could be better suited to the task of standing up to such injustice than Rwanda, Israel's perpetual partner in persecution? Upon Kagame's arrival this week, Netanyahu repeated the "never again" pledge at the root of the Israel/Rwanda pact and the US/NATO ideology of humanitarian military "intervention":

"We have pledged, I think, both our peoples, one simple pledge. Never again. Never again. We who witnessed the greatest holocaust in history, you who witnessed perhaps one of the most recent ones. Never again. That's another great bond between us."

Kagame, in turn, welcomed Israel's expansion on the African continent:

"Ever since the Prime Minister's historic visit to East Africa last year, Israel has continued to follow through on its commitment and objective of scaling up

engagement across Africa. This is a very positive trend which can only be welcomed and merits our support. We are looking forward to reinforcing our collaboration with Israel on common challenges of mutual interest.”

Current collaborations include Israel’s security forces training Rwanda’s. By the second day of his visit, Kagame was claiming that he needs Israel’s help to defeat jihadists in Rwanda—a nation that is more than 95 percent Christian—because al-Shabaab might spread south from Somalia, Boko Haram east from Nigeria.

“We need these capacities,” he said, “to prevent that from happening and to deal with it when it happens.”

In fact, Kagame needs a fierce, all-pervasive military police force to control his own people, the majority of whom are Hutus who have been demonized, impoverished, and/or imprisoned by his de facto Tutsi dictatorship, much like Palestinians in their own homeland.

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