

Iran more committed to non-proliferation than Israel: British journalist

Tehran Times Political Desk

The fact that Iran has signed the NPT shows it is more committed to non-proliferation than the three nuclear weapons states that have refused to sign the NPT, says British journalist Matt Kennard.

In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, Mr. Kennard stated that it is sheer hypocrisy when sanctions are placed on Iran while the United States ignores the nuclear weapons programs of certain countries and has even recognized India as a legitimate nuclear power.

Following is an excerpt of the interview with Mr. Kennard, who also runs the global news and comment site The Comment Factory:

Q: The U.S. vetoed three rounds of UN Security Council resolutions against Israel but supported the imposition of UN economic sanctions on Iran for its peaceful nuclear energy program. What do you make of that?

A: Well your question really highlights the hypocrisy of the UN. It is basically a clearinghouse for U.S. foreign policy and when it shows any principled demurral, the U.S. goes forward anyway, like they did in Iraq and the war on Serbia in 1999, illegally both times.



So there should be no surprise that the UN is used to condemn Iran for their nuclear activities, while it stays silent on the 200-300 nuclear warheads Israel has and the thousands the U.S. and their allies have.

Q: Why is almost nothing being said about Israel's nuclear arsenal?

A: I believe all nuclear warheads should be phased out everywhere, but the fact is that Iran is actually a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is aimed at curtailing nuclear weapons, so it is therefore more committed to the scale-down than Israel, Pakistan, or India, all of whom have refused to sign up to the NPT, and all of whom have nuclear weapons, and all of whom are big allies of the U.S.

It shows that if you are an ally of the U.S. you don't have to abide by international treaties because you just don't sign up to them!

Of course, it is rank hypocrisy to put sanctions on Iran while supporting other states doing exactly the same thing. In fact, in October last year the U.S. recognized India's legitimate place as a nuclear power. Why not Iran's?

Q: How do you assess UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's response to the Gaza crisis?

A: When you talk about the UN you have to understand its power relations. It's a fundamentally undemocratic institution. Five powers hold veto power over the Security Council and the U.S. inevitably vetoes any resolution critical of its client state, Israel, so the chances of getting a representative statement from the UN on anything is just institutionally impossible. The secretary general himself has to be proposed by the Security Council, so the candidate has to be sufficiently veto-proof, i.e. will not speak out too forcefully against any of the "Great Powers" clients.

Add to that the fact that nearly a quarter of the UN's budget comes from the U.S. and you start to understand why its employees find it so difficult to criticize Israel.

Having said this, Ban Ki-Moon did make the journey to Gaza, something which the "Peace Envoy" Tony Blair has never done, and did speak out at the devastation that Israel caused, which included the pounding of UN facilities and the destruction of aid, and said Israel should be held "accountable".

But when you think about the level of the crimes committed in Gaza, and against the UN as well, these words seem completely insufficient. The whole world witnessed the massacre of 1,300 defenseless people over two weeks; is this all Ban Ki-Moon could come up with? It really goes to show that anyone fighting for justice and against war should not hold out hopes for the UN.

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Q: Do you believe Arab states and the European Union are also partially responsible for the civilian deaths in Gaza?

A: Well, the performance of the Arab countries really showed them up for what they are: stooges of the U.S. just like Israel. Saudi Arabia, a monarchy, had its hands tied because it is allowed to carry on its ways for it is the biggest friend of the U.S. in the Middle East after Israel. So how can it speak out against its own friend?

Egypt is the same. The corrupt dictator Mubarak has helped the U.S. and

Israel crush the Palestinians for years by refusing to let aid and commerce through the Rafah crossing and other points. Why does he do this? Because Egypt is the second largest recipient of aid from the U.S., after Israel, and you can't upset your biggest backer!

In the case of Egypt, Mubarak has overseen the brutal suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is intimately linked with Hamas, so Mubarak had another interest in seeing Hamas, and the Palestinian people who voted for them in a democratic election, smashed to pieces.

The only Arab leader that has consistently supported the Palestinian people is Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and whatever you think of Hezbollah, his commitment is unmatched by anyone else.

Q: Do you believe a tribunal should be established to investigate Israel's war crimes in Gaza? And how would the international community have reacted if Syria, Lebanon,

Venezuela, or Bolivia had committed such atrocities?

A: I think there should definitely be an investigation into the war crimes committed by Israel in Gaza. That's without question, and it would be unthinkable not to have an investigation if this was any other state than Israel. Look at what happened in the aftermath of NATO's attack on Serbia and the atrocities in Kosovo. The perpetrators of the attacks were hunted down and put on trial, and the search still continues for those responsible.

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That should happen to Israel too. But it won't because, like the UN, the international justice institutions are a function of power, and when they actually do take a stand they are dutifully ignored. Ehud Barak has already said that the Israeli government will help defend any of their soldiers who are tried for war crimes, because, of course, he is a criminal himself, and if they are found guilty, then so is he.

If the atrocities carried out by Israel were emulated by any of the states you mention, they would probably be bombed, arraigned before a court, and then the leaders put in jail for the rest of their lives.

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