

UN body okays Goldstone Gaza report accusing Israel of war crimes

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The UN Human Rights Council on Friday endorsed a Gaza report that accused both Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas of committing war crimes in their December-January conflict.

In a special session, 25 of the body's members voted in favor of the resolution that chastised Israel for failing to cooperate with the UN mission led by South African jurist Richard Goldstone. Another 6 voted against and 11 abstained.

Both Israel and Hamas have rejected the charges in the Goldstone report, which is most critical of Jerusalem. The report calls for the UN Security Council to refer the matter to the International Criminal Court if the Israelis or Palestinians fail to investigate the alleged abuses themselves.

The countries that voted against the report included the U.S., Italy, Holland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Ukraine.

China, Russia, Egypt, India, Jordan, Pakistan, South Africa, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Ghana, Indonesia, Djibouti, Liberia, Qatar, Senegal, Brazil, Mauritius, Nicaragua and Nigeria voted in favor of the report.

The abstaining countries included : Bosnia, Burkina-Faso, Cameron, Gabon, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Belgium, South Korea, Slovenia and Uruguay.

Madagascar and Kyrgyzstan were not present during the vote.

France called on Friday to delay the UN Human Rights Council vote in Geneva regarding the adoption of the Goldstone Gaza Report by half an hour in a last-minute attempt to lobby allies to reject the report's findings.

The French delegates joined Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent diplomatic attempts to lobby European counterparts, including Holland, Spain and Denmark, to back Israel's rejection of the report's findings.

The report, which was written by South African Judge Richard Goldstone, accuses Israel and Hamas of war crimes during the Gaza offensive in December 2008.

Officials from Adalah - the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel - said the French representative in Geneva asked to postpone the vote minutes before the council adjourned for a break.

Days before the vote Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attempted to lobby diplomatic support to back Israel's objection of the report which accuses Israel of war crimes.

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