Jonathan Greenblatt
CEO and National Director

March 15, 2022

Dr. Agnès Callamard
Secretary General
Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London, WC1X 0DW, UK

Dear Madam Secretary General,

I am reaching out to express serious concern about the recent hostility displayed by Amnesty International and its employees towards Israel and its supporters, including the casting aspersions on the majority of those within the Jewish community who have deep ties to the Jewish state.

ADL is the oldest anti-hate org in the US. Since 1913 we have fought antisemitism and all forms of hate. In recent years, ADL has tracked a surge of anti-Jewish activity in the US; from 2015-2020, antisemitic incidents increased more than 114%. From Charlottesville to Pittsburgh to Times Square to Colleyville, we are living in an environment where American Jews frequently are demonized, threatened and brutalized in the sanctuaries where we worship, the stores where we shop, and the places where we live.

Keeping in mind this context, ADL strongly objected to many of the elements in the February 2022 Amnesty UK report titled Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity. As we said at the time, our objection to the report stemmed from the fact that it went beyond just criticizing Israeli policies and actions to painting Israel's very establishment as illegitimate, immoral, and faulted. The report alleged that Israel's crimes go back to the sin of its creation in 1948, which served to present the Jewish and democratic state as singularly illegitimate at its foundational roots.

Adding insult to injury, just last week, in addressing this same report and its recommendations, Amnesty USA Director Paul O'Brien, in a speech to the Women's National Democratic Club, tried to explain why most Jews don't really feel attached to Israel – contrary to the results revealed in poll after poll – while arguing Israel shouldn't exist as a

Jewish state. The arrogance and audacity is almost inexplicable. Would Mr. O'Brien hector other marginalized communities and tell them how to feel?

In addition, in an apparent effort to clarify his remarks, Mr. O'Brien claimed that "Amnesty takes no political views on any question, including the right of the State of Israel to survive." This seems to run completely contrary to how Amnesty has operated in practice over decades. We are aware that Mr. O'Brien since has attempted to explain his comments, though recordings of his remarks confirm the accuracy of these reports. Moreover, does Amnesty believe it is permissible for countries to threaten to annihilate any nation-state? Is it a political view to call out when the Russian leadership threatens to destroy Ukraine?

These episodes sadly demonstrate how Amnesty appears to have abandoned its perch as a leading global human rights organization. It appears to have adopted the practices of an activist anti-Israel organization that seeks to politicize not just the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also Zionism and the millennia-old Jewish connection to Israel. It is lamentable that Amnesty has decided to cast Israel and its supporters, including Jews around the world, as the evil protagonists in a warped narrative of the conflict. This not only serves to harm good-faith efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but is especially shameful in the current global environment of rising anti-Jewish hate. This kind of anti-Israel propaganda could have been prepared by the former USSR and we fully expect it will exacerbate and intensify antisemitism.

Amnesty has a long and important track record as a global entity and I know that you defer to your national chapters. Nonetheless I urge you to consider the concerns as noted in this letter and to explore how to heal the pain caused by your report and subsequent statements of your staff. I would welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss these topics in greater depth and explore how ADL can help you to address these issues.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Greenblatt
CEO and National Director