

His Excellency Mr. António Guterres  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
760 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017  
United States of America

His Excellency Volker Turk  
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais des Nations  
1211 Geneva

3 June 2024

## **Violations of Code of Conduct Complaint & Access to Information Request**

Dear Secretary-General Guterres and High Commissioner Turk:

We are filing this Complaint, pursuant to Article 3 of the United Nations Special Procedures [Code of Conduct](#), over gross violations of UN rules and professional ethics by Ms. Francesca Albanese, the Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on the Palestinian territories.

This is on top of Ms. Albanese's disgraceful statements and actions that promote antisemitism and terrorism, for which you should condemn her and call for her removal, including:

- Ms. Albanese wrote that *"America is subjugated by the Jewish Lobby"* in an [UNRWA fundraiser](#) letter that she posted on Facebook. She was condemned for this by the U.S. Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism.
- Ms. Albanese routinely [portrays](#) Israelis as Nazis.
- In November 2022, Ms. Albanese [told](#) a Hamas conference: *"You have a right to resist."*
- Since October 7<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Albanese has systematically [whitewashed](#) Hamas' atrocities.
- Ms. Albanese denied that the October 7<sup>th</sup> pogrom was the worst attack on Jews since the Holocaust, for which she became the first Special Rapporteur in history to be condemned for antisemitism by France as well as Germany. France [wrote](#) to her that "The October 7 massacre is the biggest antisemitic massacre of the 21st century," and "to deny it is wrong." France said it was "scandalous" and "a

disgrace” for you “to appear to justify it, by dragging in the name of the United Nations.” Germany [said](#) it was “appalling” for the Special Rapporteur “to justify the horrific terror attacks and to “deny their antisemitic nature.” Germany said Ms. Albanese’s remarks were “a disgrace.”

## **1. Demand for Investigation: Francesca Albanese Illegally Requesting Payments For Work Done in Official Capacity**

First, this Complaint requests that you commence an immediate and independent investigation into serious and substantiated allegations that Ms. Albanese has been illegally requesting payments for work done in her official UN capacity, in gross violation of her solemn obligations under the Code of Conduct.

As you know, Article 3 of the Special Procedures [Code of Conduct](#) expressly prohibits Ms. Albanese from accepting remuneration from “any governmental or non-governmental source” for “activities carried out in pursuit of his/her mandate.” Indeed, as noted below, the office of Ms. Albanese has acknowledged this prohibition, noting that she “cannot take [an] honorarium for anything she does in her official capacity.”

As the evidence shows, Ms. Albanese is engaged in a practice by which she knowingly and unethically circumvents this prohibition, by requesting instead that, in exchange for her lectures, payments by external groups be made to her research assistant.

In correspondence that has been confirmed by Ms. Albanese’s office<sup>1</sup>, in response to a request for Ms. Albanese to speak to student protesters at Columbia University on 7 May 2024, Ms. Albanese’s assistant Eleonora De Martin [replied](#) to the purported event organizer:

“[C]oncerning the honorarium, she [Ms. Albanese] cannot take honorarium for anything she does in her official capacity. However, she kindly asks for this honorarium to be transferred to the Fellowship of her volunteer which supports her mandate and work. Could you please provide some detail on the sum of the honorarium? The research institute will then send you the invoice for payment.”

In other words, the Albanese correspondence confirms the following:

- As remuneration for speaking, Ms. Albanese “kindly” asked that payment of an honorarium be made to her assistant. An unnamed “research institute” issues the invoices.
- This same payment was acknowledged by Ms. Albanese to be *improper* for her to accept. Thus Ms. Albanese was “kindly” asking that a payment be made

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<sup>1</sup> See statement by Sara Troian from the office of Francesca Albanese in K. Akiva, *UN Official Duped By Fake Rabbi’s Invite To Speak On ‘Morality Of Intifada’ At Anti-Israel Protest*, **The Daily Wire** (May 7, 2024), <https://www.dailywire.com/news/un-official-duped-by-fake-rabbis-invite-to-speak-on-morality-of-intifada-at-anti-israel-protest>,

indirectly to her assistant which she knows was improper for her to accept directly.

- Contrary to later claims by her colleague Sara Troian that “it was *me* proposing” that the funds be sent, the original email from Albanese’s UNSROPT office made clear that the proposal was made by Ms. Albanese herself: “*she* kindly asks for this honorarium to be transferred to the Fellowship of *her volunteer* which supports *her mandate and work*.”

Excellencies, in light of the foregoing, we respectfully request that you commence an immediate and independent investigation into Ms. Albanese’s violations of the Code of Conduct.

Moreover, under the transparency guarantees enshrined in Resolution 16/21,<sup>2</sup> in which the Council highlighted “the need for full transparency in the funding of the special procedures,” we further request:

(a) Full UN disclosure, including with dates and amounts, of all honoraria or other payments received by UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese—either directly or indirectly including via Ms. Sara Troian, or via any other assistants or “institutes,” since her tenure began on 1 May 2022;

(b) Name of the “institute” which, as per Ms. Albanese’s office, is issuing the invoices for such payments in exchange for Ms. Albanese’s lectures or lobbying activities; and

(c) An explanation as to how UN human rights officials can legally ask for or accept funds from any non-UN sources, paid via Ms. Albanese’s office or otherwise, in exchange for the performance of lectures or any other functions related to her UN mandate and work.

## **2. Palestinian Lobby Group Says It “Sponsored” Francesca Albanese’s \$20,000 Australian Visit**

Second, we request that the remit of the investigation into Ms. Albanese’s financial practices include an examination and disclosure of information relating to her November 2023 trip to Sydney, Australia, together with an additional six flights—to Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne again, then Auckland and Wellington in New Zealand—which is estimated to have cost \$22,500.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 16/21, Article 24: “The integrity and independence of the special procedures and the principles of cooperation, transparency and accountability are integral...”

<sup>3</sup> The average cost of Business Class air travel to Australia and New Zealand, departing from Ms. Albanese’s current domicile in Tunis, is at least USD \$10,000. The six additional flights are estimated to have cost a total of \$2500. Ms. Albanese arrived in Sydney on 9 November 2023, and is understood to have left New Zealand for her return journey to Europe on or around 22 November. Ms. Albanese’s hotel accommodations for 13 nights, meals, local transportation to her numerous meetings and related expenses are estimated at \$5,000. Assuming that her assistant Sara Troian flew in Economy Class, her flights, hotel and other expenses are estimated at \$5,000. The total cost for Ms. Albanese and her

This figure includes expenses for Ms. Sara Troian, who accompanied Ms. Albanese on the trip.<sup>4</sup>

Evidence indicates that Ms. Albanese, directly or indirectly via Sara Troian and the unnamed “institute,” either (a) improperly accepted a significant remuneration pro-Palestinian lobby groups to cover all or part of these expenses, in gross and material breach of the Code of Conduct, or (b) improperly arranged for the UN to pay for her trip across the world, accompanied by at least one assistant, to a country that has no connection whatsoever with Ms. Albanese’s specific mandate to investigate human rights in the Palestinian territories, in a trip that involved no investigating whatsoever.

The first of the above two scenarios is substantiated in the statements of several Palestinian lobby groups to the effect that they “sponsored” or “supported” Ms. Albanese’s visit to Australia and New Zealand:

- Australian Friends of Palestine Association (AFOPA) [stated](#) on its website that the lobby group “*sponsored Ms. Albanese’s visit to Australia.*” AFOPA is a group that explicitly [solicits donations](#) to fund its [lobbying work](#), under which category it cites the Edward Said lecture and the Press Club—both of which were performed by Francesca Albanese during her visit to Australia that was “sponsored” by AFOPA. Ms. Albanese [thanked](#) AFOPA for “organizing such a busy visit,” which included her [meetings](#) with pro-Palestinian politicians in New South Wales and South Australia, and in Canberra with politicians of the Australian Green Party and foreign ministry officials. Notably, Albanese did not thank any UN body or office for organizing her trip or meetings.
- Likewise, [according to](#) an Australian government agency, Ms. Albanese’s visit to Australia was “*as the guest of the Australian Friends of Palestine Association.*”<sup>5</sup>
- Free Palestine Melbourne stated that it “*supported her visit to Victoria, ACT [Australian Capital Territory] and NSW [New South Wales].*”<sup>6</sup> Free Palestine Melbourne openly [describes](#) how it lobbies politicians, organizes protests, and promotes the anti-Israel boycott, divestment and sanction (BDS) campaign.
- Australian Palestinian Advocacy Network (APAN), headed by [convicted kidnapper](#) and  [Hamas supporter](#) Nasser Mashni, said it was “*honoured to support*

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entourage is thus estimated at \$22,500. If Sara Troian flew in Business Class together with the Special Rapporteur, the total cost of the trip for Ms. Albanese is estimated at \$30,000.

<sup>4</sup> Opening her AFOPA lecture in Adelaide, Albanese [thanked](#) Sara Troian for 15 months of work. Ms. Troian is further [listed](#) as attending Ms. Albanese’s November 20th meeting in Auckland, New Zealand, in which Ms. Albanese lobbied the NZSF to divest from Israel-related companies.

<sup>5</sup> See also, Francesca Albanese, **National Press Club of Australia** (November 14, 2023), <https://www.npc.org.au/speaker/2023/1242-francesca-albanese>.

<sup>6</sup> See also, **Australian peak bodies condemn allegations against UN Rapporteur Francesca Albanese, Pearls and Irritations** (November 21, 2023), <https://johnmenadue.com/australian-peak-bodies-condemn-allegations-against-un-human-rights-expert-francesca-albanese/>.

[the visit](#)” to Australia of Ms. Albanese. APAN explicitly states that it engages in “lobbying” for Palestinians.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, during her visit, APAN [facilitated](#) “a range of meetings” for Ms. Albanese “with both parliamentarians and civil society.”

- Palestinian Christians in Australia (PCIA) “[supported her visit to Victoria, ACT \[Australian Capital Territory\] and NSW \[New South Wales\].](#)” The group engages in “[direct lobbying](#)” of politicians. During her visit, Ms. Albanese helped PCIA [fundraise](#) by addressing their [gala dinner](#) event with the participation of the [Palestinian government](#). Ticket prices for the fundraising gala were \$90 for members, and \$99 for non-members. Albanese [thanked](#) PCIA, together with AFOPA and APAN, for “inviting me to this country.” Notably, Albanese did not thank the UN or mention anywhere that it was the world body that paid for the trip.
- Likewise, Ms. Albanese’s visit to New Zealand on November 20-21 was not organized by the UN, but rather by the Palestinians in Aotearoa Co-ordinating Committee (PACC) and Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa (PSNA). The groups arranged for her to speak with media, politicians, campaign groups, as well as two public events. They also arranged for and joined Ms. Albanese to [lobby](#) a major New Zealand sovereign wealth fund to divest from Israel-related companies. According to the [notes](#), Ms. Albanese, was accompanied by Sara Troian, described in the notes as “volunteer supporter, University of the Netherlands.” Ms. Albanese’s visit to New Zealand is currently the object of a [Freedom of Information request](#) concerning her meetings with the foreign ministry, due to be answered by the government on 5 June 2024.

As part of her trip to Australia, Ms. Albanese delivered AFOPA’s annual Edward Said Memorial Lecture in Adelaide and made media appearances, including an address to the National Press Club in which she [parroted](#) the Hamas narrative that Israel’s right to self-defence was “non-existent.” Once again, it was not the United Nations which arranged the press club event, but rather the Australian Palestinian Advocacy Network (APAN), headed by [convicted kidnapper](#) and [Hamis supporter](#) Nasser Mashni. “*APAN has secured Francesca Albanese... as a speaker for the National Press Club in Canberra,*” the group [tweeted](#).

Excellencies, independence and impartiality are basic requirements for UNHRC Special Procedures under Article 3 of the [Code of Conduct](#), which requires them to be “free from any kind of extraneous influence...either direct or indirect.” In addition, they may not “seek nor accept instructions” from any “non-governmental organization or pressure group whatsoever,” or accept any “favour, gift or remuneration” from any “non-governmental source for activities carried out in pursuit of his/her mandate.”

In light of the above, it is clear that the lobby groups’ stated sponsorship of Ms. Albanese’s trip constitutes a blatantly prohibited form of favour, gift or remuneration under Article 3. The financial favour further subjects Ms. Albanese to prohibited direct

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<sup>7</sup> One of APAN’s three stated focus areas is “*Political Lobbying*,” An APAN intern writes: “Highlights from my experience include meeting UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese and *lobbying politicians* across the continent to stand up for Palestine.” (See: <https://apan.org.au/palestinian-youth-internship/>)

or indirect influence. Indeed, these groups have urged her to [sue](#) an organization that called out her pro-Hamas remarks.

Ms. Albanese's gross violations of UN rules and ethics, if confirmed, constitute further grounds for you to take action to remove Ms. Albanese from her position as Special Rapporteur.

### **3. Albanese Denies Palestinian Lobby Sponsorship, Claims UN Paid For Trip**

Contradicting the [statement](#) of the Palestinian lobby group, Ms. Albanese [denied](#) that AFOPA sponsored her trip to Australia, claiming instead that her trip to Australia *"was paid by the UN as part of my mandate's activities."*

Bizarrely, however, rather than cite a UN source for this claim, or produce documentation showing that the UN paid for her travel and that of her entourage, Ms. Albanese instead cited the lobby group, the Australian Friends of Palestine Association. *"The 'Palestinian lobby' falsely accused by UN Watch of funding my trip to Australia confirms the UN funded it,"* tweeted Albanese.

She cited to this [statement](#) by AFOPA: *"Ms. Albanese was authorized by the UN to accept AFOPA's invitation to deliver the Edward Said Memorial Lecture. The UN funded Ms. Albanese's travel & accommodation costs. No Palestinian Solidarity group paid for this trip."*

But how could AFOPA know what the UN "funded," or "authorized"? Ms. Albanese never publicly discloses her UN travel and other expenses. One possible scenario is that AFOPA initially paid for the expenses of Ms. Albanese and her entourage, and then later, after UN Watch began to ask questions, it subsequently arranged for the UN to send them a reimbursement, in order to be able to publicly state that "The UN funded Ms. Albanese's travel & accommodation costs."

Excellencies, in light of the foregoing, we respectfully request that you do the following:

1. Explain in what manner the Palestinian lobby groups in Australia "sponsored" and "supported" Ms. Albanese's trip;
2. Produce receipts and documentation of all expenses incurred in connection with the Special Rapporteur's trip to Australia and New Zealand, including all travel, hotel, food, and local transportation expenses, whether incurred by Ms. Albanese or other members of her entourage, including Sara Troian;
3. Describe in detail which expenses incurred by Ms. Albanese and her entourage in connection with their trip to Australia and New Zealand were paid for by the UN;
4. Indicate any prior instance in the history of the UN when a Special Rapporteur was funded by the UN to fly to a country as "the guest of" a partisan lobby group—and in a country unrelated to the expert's mandate—in order to perform media advocacy and lobbying on the basis of which that lobby fundraises; and

5. Provide a copy of all meeting notes, minutes, emails, briefing notes, file notes and such like arising from the meetings of Ms. Albanese and her entourage while in Australia and New Zealand, in line with the [pro-active disclosure](#) made by the New Zealand Super Fund concerning Ms. Albanese's November 20th lobbying meeting in Auckland.

Excellencies, if, as Ms. Albanese claims, the UN did fund all or part of Ms. Albanese's trip to Australia, this would constitute a gross breach of UN rules and procedures because UN funds are intended to cover only [official country missions](#). For country-specific mandates, this means visits to the country concerned, usually at the invitation of the government. As detailed in the [Practical Guide to Special Procedures](#), UN funds are *not* available to cover informal visits such as Ms. Albanese's trip to Australia. The only exception would be trips to third countries to interview human rights victims or groups, in situations where travel to the country concerned is not possible. Otherwise, we are unaware of country-specific mandate-holders carrying out official UN-funded visits to countries other than the one that is the object of the mandate.

In this regard, it is notable that Ms. Albanese's trip to Australia and New Zealand *does not appear* in the 2023 list of official country visits that is contained in the [Facts and figures with regard to special procedures in 2023 report](#). Therefore, it is clear that the trip was not viewed by either Ms. Albanese or the UN as an official country visit that would warrant UN funding.

Excellencies, the disgraceful support for terrorism and promotion of antisemitism by UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese casts a shadow upon a reputation of the United Nations as whole. This is now compounded by serious financial improprieties. To maintain and enhance public trust in the United Nations, we urge the UN to demonstrate its commitment to openness and transparency by responding forthwith to our requests concerning the grave matters outlined above.

Sincerely,



Hillel C. Neuer  
Executive Director

CC: Ambassador Omar Zniber, President of the UN Human Rights Council  
Ms. Isha Dyfan, Chair of UNHRC Coordination Committee of Special Procedures