

Another Year, Another U.N. Scandal



by Bruce Bawer

It doesn't happen too often anymore, but every now and then we're reminded that that wretched left-wing propaganda sheet, the *New York Times*, is still capable of publishing objective works of investigative journalism. Witness its bombshell May 7 [report](#) on corruption at the United Nations. Yes, the reporters bylined on the story are David A. Fahrenthold, who won a Pulitzer for smearing Donald Trump, and Farnaz Fassihi, who's been accused of shilling for Iran. But this time around their work looks legit.

Over the decades, of course, there's been a lot of shameless, bald-faced corruption at the U.N. But the story served up by Fahrenthold and Fassihi is particularly ludicrous. It involves an obscure U.N. agency called the Office for Project Services (UNOPS), which, until May 8, was headed by Grete Faremo, formerly Norway's Minister of Defense. The agency, as the *Times* reporters noted, serves as "a kind of general contractor," hired by other U.N. agencies "to build schools and roads, deliver medical equipment or perform other logistical tasks."

In short, UNOPS is low-profile and unsexy. But Faremo, after

taking over in 2014, sought to change that. UNOPS “had stockpiled tens of millions of dollars in excess fees paid to it by other U.N. agencies,” and Faremo’s idea was “to lend out the money, like a bank, to fund profit-making projects in the developing world,” thereby converting UNOPS into “a revolutionary in-house investment firm.”

But how to find people to lend money to? Any responsibly run foundation would solicit applications and put together a committee of experienced advisors to select deserving applicants. Faremo’s answer was to throw a cocktail party – where she met British businessman David Kendrick and his daughter Daisy.

First Faremo awarded a \$3 million grant to Daisy, a recent college graduate whose nonprofit hadn’t been registered with the IRS and listed people as directors without their knowledge. In exchange for the \$3 million from UNOPS she “produced events, a website, ocean-themed games...and a pop song about the ocean that was [recorded](#) by the British singer Joss Stone.” Stone performed this ditty for free because she’d been told she was helping raise money for the U.N.

Jonas Svensson, who left UNOPS after realizing it was a hotbed of “[a]mbition and stupidity,” told the *Times* that during all this activity “his bosses were focused on arranging a performance of the song by Ms. Faremo,” which ended up taking place during a 2017 environmental conference. Yes, long before you heard Biden’s disinformation czar, Nina Jankowitz, sing her own version of “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious,” the head of UNOPS was belting one out in the General Assembly chamber. To wit:

Can’t you hear the ocean crying

Calling out to be revived?...

Just a drop of rain, that’s all I am

And we're all the same

We have the power to make a wave

If we move together as one...

We are the ocean

We are the ocean

We are the ocean

In addition to the \$3 million handout to Daisy Kendrick, Faremo loaned \$22 million to several firms that were controlled, directly or indirectly, by Daisy's dad. The money was supposedly intended to go to construction projects, but in the end nothing was built, and the firms used much of the UNOPS cash to pay off debts.

Immediately after the *Times* article was posted online, Faremo resigned. Apparently there's already been an internal investigation into this matter, but, given the lack of transparency at the U.N., it's unclear whether the results will ever be made public.

At the *Times* website, the reader comments on all these hijinks divide into two categories. Some are by self-deluding lefties who insist on seeing the U.N. as idealistic and incorruptible. Others are by people who know better. A veteran of UNHCR and UNICEF operations around the world recalls that "incompetence and dithering were the order of the day." A former UN intern states that "the experience left me very disgruntled. My boss, a high ranking official, often did not show up to work and when he did, did not complete his responsibilities....It was a running joke that the unpaid interns were the hardest working people in the office." Another reader opines that the UN should "cease to exist," since it's "no more than a source of well-paying jobs for incompetents, charlatans, work-averse socialites, con artists and white-collar criminals."

In Norway, it was widely noted that Faremo is only the latest of several Norwegians-turned-U.N.-luminaries who ended in disgrace. In 2018, Erik Solheim quit his post as head of the United Nations Environmental Programme amid questions about his nepotism, grotesquely high travel expenses, and eager promotion of Chinese development projects. Two years ago, Terje Rød-Larsen resigned from the presidency of the U.N.-linked International Peace Institute when it emerged that he'd borrowed a large sum from Jeffrey Epstein and then tried to pay it back with IPI funds.

U.N. corruption is an old, old story, and prominent Norwegians have made a sad joke of their country's relentless promotion of U.N. worship. And yet that promotion continues non-stop. Every October 24 – United Nations Day – Norwegian schoolchildren are put through North Korea-like celebrations of the saintly souls at the U.N. They hold parades in which they wave U.N. flags. They're shown short films claiming that the U.N. is the only thing standing between them and war, oppression, poverty, and climate crisis.

As I wrote ten years ago in a piece about the first-rate documentary exposé *UN Me*, the U.N.'s real priorities are clear: it exists to "perpetuat[e] its own existence," to "enhanc[e] its own image," to "squelch the truth about its fecklessness, incompetence, and absolute lack of a moral compass," and (last but not least) to "provid[e] hack politicians from around the world with yet another career steppingstone, once they've risen to the top of the ladder in their own crummy little countries and finished emptying their own citizens' pockets."

Well, that final item on the list certainly sums up the U.N. career of Grete Faremo – who, after lying low for a few months, will, I'm all but certain, re-emerge as the head of some EU body or NGO. In the same way, can anyone doubt that another U.N. scandal isn't that far down the pike? The lessons of all this being that (a) you can't keep a corrupt, power-

hungry European politician down and (b) the U.N., no matter how much it's been proven, especially during the current war in Ukraine, to be a Ship of Fools – a luxury yacht for mediocre international elites rather than a lifeboat for the world's poor – will somehow manage to stay afloat.

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